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World's biggest sports takeover

BSkyB nets United in £625m deal

By Raymond Snoddy and Jason Nissé

THE BOARD of Manchester United last night recommended a £625 million offer from the satellite television company BSkyB after frantic negotiations during the day added nearly £40 million to the value of one of the world's most famous football clubs.

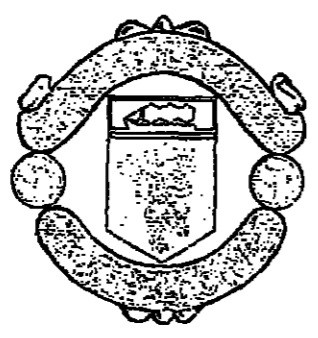
The 240p a share deal, which will be examined by the Office of Fair Trading, is the most lucrative acquisition of a sports club in the world. A rival bid was thought unlikely after Time Warner, the American media giant which was said to be backing a potential offer from the investment group Enic, said it was not in the running to buy the club.

Less than a decade ago Martin Edwards, Manchester United's chief executive, was willing to sell the club for just £20 million. Mr Edwards, who owns 14 per cent of the shares, now stands to make about £85 million from the BSkyB acquisition.

The deal was finally done after a day of tense negotiations in which the price offered rose from 230p a share to 240p while United shares slipped from 206½p to 200p. The increased price was accompanied by an ultimatum that unless the deal was done by 5pm, the offer would be withdrawn and the prospect of a purchase would be at an end.

The deal will be announced on the Stock Exchange this morning and it is expected that Alex Ferguson, the team manager, will endorse the BSkyB acquisition before the match against Charlton Athletic tonight.

BSkyB — in which News International, owner of The Times, has a 40 per cent stake



BSkyB's main purpose in buying Manchester United — it is the first broadcaster to buy a football club in Britain — is to obtain an insurance policy to protect one of its main business areas, the exclusive televising of live football.

In January an important case comes before the Restrictive Practices Court which could result in the Premiership being judged an illegal cartel which cannot collectively negotiate television rights. If the case succeeded, the agreements between BSkyB, the BBC and the Premier League could be struck down and television companies would have to negotiate rights with individual clubs.

If the BSkyB-Manchester United deal is approved by shareholders and regulators, the broadcasting group would at least have the rights to televise games at Old Trafford.

The insurance policy could also work in the longer term. The present BSkyB-Premier League television deal runs out in 2001 and a number of clubs could be tempted to use digital television to create their own football channels.

Other broadcasters may now be encouraged to take out insurance policies of their own by buying a football club. Rumours have linked Enic, which owns 25 per cent of Glasgow Rangers, with Newcastle United, Aston Villa and Tottenham Hotspur. Carlton Communications is said to be eyeing Arsenal, who won the double last season.

Other potential bidders for football clubs include the leisure and television group Granada, which has a stake in BSkyB, Canal Plus, the French media company which owns Paris St Germain, and DirectTV, the US pay-television group.

Commentary, page 25
Oliver Holt, page 44

Hundreds of women tricked into charlatan's fake HIV tests

By Tim Jones

A BOGUS doctor who destroyed loving relationships by subjecting hundreds of women to worthless tests for sexually transmitted diseases was jailed for five years yesterday.

Godwin Onubogu was denounced by a judge as a charlatan after the Old Bailey was told that he had also made thousands of pounds by posing as an expert witness for motorists in drink-drive cases who believed he that could save their licences.

Although barely educated, 52-year-old Onubogu was able to practice his deceit for almost ten years, putting hundreds of patients at risk before being found out.

His activities, conducted from a "clinical laboratory" in Balham High Road, South London, triggered an unprecedented alert from Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, and GPs throughout the country were asked to question up to 500 people on whether Onubogu had subjected them to tests for cancer or HIV. More than 100 of his victims who had paid thousands of pounds for false diagnosis contacted a confidential health line set up by the South Thames and the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth health authorities.

Wandsworth council had been trying for years to have his laboratory shut down, but were told that the Health and Safety Executive, the General Medical Council and the Royal College of Pathologists were powerless to act.

A spokesman for the council said that there was nothing to prevent someone setting up a laboratory and calling themselves "doctor" if they did not claim to be registered or commit a criminal act.

Almost invariably, Onubogu would falsely tell patients — mainly women from the immigrant community — that they were suffering from gonorrhoea. He tested some, gave advice on HIV, and sometimes shared the information with their partners. That destroyed at least three marriages and damaged scores of relationships.

Onubogu, who is believed to

have made more than £500,000 from his activities, was found guilty earlier this year of 15 charges of indecent assault, obtaining property by deception, illegally supplying medical prescriptions and unlawful wounding in respect of his injections.

Yesterday, at the end of a trial relating to his "rent a witness" activities, he was found guilty of a further nine charges of actions intended to pervert the course of justice.

Onubogu had tried to get both trials stopped by repeatedly sacking his counsel and feigning illness — the first started with him lying on the dock floor complaining of a heart condition.

But yesterday, Judge Gerald Gordon, QC, jailed him for

6 You set out to deceive with grandiose reports containing downright lies and pseudo-scientific babbles

five years, saying: "Those who submit themselves to medical treatment have got to be protected from charlatans like you. That is what you were and that is what you are."

"You set out to deceive magistrates' courts by producing grandiose reports and exhibits containing a mixture of downright lies and pseudo-scientific babbles, which you claimed came from a man of the highest possible achievement. The status you put forward was out of keeping with reality."

Nigel Mylne, QC, for Onubogu, said that his client suffered from delusions of grandeur which stemmed from the fact that he had failed to keep up with the achievements of other members of his family. "He claims that he is the number one world authority in microbiology. This sums up his problem."

Fantasy world, page 3



Godwin Onubogu, the bogus doctor who acted as a "rent a witness"

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Nurses offered merit pay

By Roland Watson, Political Correspondent

NURSES, midwives and health visitors who take on extra duties could add more than £1,000 a year to their salaries under a bonus scheme to be unveiled today.

The merit awards, to be administered by local trusts, would seek to reward workers who made a significant contribution to the NHS. They would be aimed at nurses at the top of their pay grades — between £15,000 and £26,000 — who took on extra responsibilities such as training staff.

The move, agreed between ministers and union chiefs, marks the first step in efforts by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, to modernise nurses' pay structure and make it easier for health chiefs to attract staff. It seeks to meet the key criticism which greeted Tony Blair's announcement yesterday of a new grade of



"Get me a supernurse"

Six soldiers who intended to march in full combat gear from John O'Groats to Land's End for charity have given up after only two days — without even reaching England. Two of the men had suffered hamstring injuries and a third pulled a thigh muscle.

The move, agreed between ministers and union chiefs, marks the first step in efforts by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, to modernise nurses' pay structure and make it easier for health chiefs to attract staff. It seeks to meet the key criticism which greeted Tony Blair's announcement yesterday of a new grade of

Clinton seeks Starr preview

The White House has asked the independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr for an advance copy of his sexually explicit report into President Clinton's conduct, claiming that he should be able to respond in advance of its imminent release to Congress.

The desperate manoeuvre by Mr Clinton's personal lawyer, Mr David Kendall, is not expected to succeed. Page 14

Shares falter

London's share price rally came to an abrupt halt after official figures showed a surprise rise in industrial activity, dampening hopes of an early cut in interest rates. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee meets today to set the cost of borrowing. Page 23

Yeltsin loses grip on regions

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

RUSSIA'S paralysed central Government appeared to be losing its authority over vast regions of the country yesterday when local governors took unilateral steps to protect their people from the deepening economic crisis.

As President Yeltsin remained out of sight dithering over whom to nominate to run his Government, and the rouble continued its slide, regional leaders from the Baltics to Siberia took drastic steps to enforce price controls.

A "state of emergency" was announced by Leonid Gorbunov, Governor of the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, in an effort to stop producers raising prices as a result of the rouble's devaluation. Similar steps were announced by General Aleksandr Lebed, Governor of Krasnoyarsk in Siberia, and the provincial leaders of the Siberian region of Omsk

and of Chuvashia, a semi-autonomous republic on the Volga river.

The central authorities declared the actions illegal but impatient regional bosses, who want stability restored in Moscow and a government to tackle the economic catastrophe, were unapologetic.

"By regulating prices, I certainly place myself on the brink of violating the law," General Lebed said. "But I consider these measures quite warranted... I am determined to prevent starvation in the region."

The move threatens to unravel the constitutional fabric of the Russian Federation, a collection of 89 territories and autonomous republics with a population of 150 million people spread across 11 time zones.

"The centre's power to control the periphery will be

eroded as the country's nine net donor regions will be less willing to pay into the federal budget," Graeme Herd, a Russian expert at the University of Aberdeen, said.

"As a result, the 80 net receiver, or consumer, regions will be even more likely to up the political ante in order to maintain the level of federal funding and subsidies," he wrote in The Moscow Times.

After an emergency Cabinet meeting last night, Viktor Chernomyrdin announced economic measures to boost foreign currency revenues and stop retailers profiting from the financial crisis, Interfax news agency reported.

If implemented, the measures would be the acting premier's first concrete steps to reverse Russia's financial crisis.

Yeltsin dithers, page 12

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Lives and marriages wrecked by fake doctor's sex diagnoses

By TIM JONES

THE dangerous fantasy-world of Godwin Onubogu began to fall apart more than three years ago when a complaint was made to the Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory regarding the bona fides of a man posing as an expert in drink-drive cases.

Onubogu used the same bogus science to fool magistrates in courts throughout London, claiming that the accused drivers were victims of "aberrant biochemistry".

But when officers from the Organised Crime Group, accompanied by a forensic scientist, visited his laboratory, they failed to find any equipment capable of carrying out blood, urine or alcohol tests. While the officers were searching his premises, a number of people called in to consult Onubogu whom they believed to be a practising and qualified doctor. The investigation was broadened. Officers soon discovered that Onubogu was a liar — and a man of staggering arrogance. In one faked refer-

THE BOGUS DOCTOR



“In one faked reference he wrote: Godwin is an enigma whose competence we all admire and glorify”

ence, he wrote: "Godwin is an enigma whose competence we all admire and glorify."

Operating from a private clinic he had set up in Balham, south London, Onubogu charged hundreds of pounds to conduct intimate examinations, administer drugs, give injections, take blood and write prescriptions.

Whatever his patients complained of, he would generally tell them they had gonorrhoea. If the patient was a woman, he would carry out an internal examination. If the

patient was a man he would advise him to bring in his partner so he could subject her to an intimate check-up.

When confronted with his "diagnosis", couples would look accusingly at each other, wondering if their partner had been unfaithful. At least three marriages were destroyed but police believe the true number is much higher.

One police doctor who examined his records suggested the incidence of gonorrhoea in

the area was so great that it should be reported to the World Health Organisation.

Louise Kamill, for the prosecution, said: "His experience is limited to half-truths and figments of his imagination. The consequences to his patients were disastrous as was the trauma."

She said that any fears his patients may have had on entering his none-too-clean surgery were allayed by pictures of him in academic robes receiving degrees and the display of a university shield.

He wore a white coat, carried a stethoscope and surrounded himself with medical equipment. There was an impressive array of books, supposedly written by him, and he awarded himself a string of letters after his name.

For his fake consultations and drugs, he demanded to be paid in cash. Most victims never complained because they were ashamed to be told they had a sexually transmitted disease and would do anything for a cure.

Onubogu's only experience in the medical profession was



Godwin Onubogu, who posed as a doctor and duped people into thinking that they had gonorrhoea. He was jailed for five years yesterday

when he worked as a junior technician on routine tasks at St Thomas' Hospital in London for a few months in 1968. He briefly worked in a laboratory helping the analyse the quality of Thames water.

He falsely claimed to have been a Fellow of St Thomas' and boasted that his work was so acclaimed that a department had been set up for him at the London School of Hy-

giene and Tropical Medicine. Onubogu insisted he had a PhD, a bachelor of science degree, and a master's in science. He completed the fantasy by awarding himself membership of the Royal College of Pathologists.

Thus armed, he set up his "Iketaim Clinical Laboratory" after being awarded a modest start-up grant by Wandsworth Enterprise Agency. Wand-

sworth council was alerted to his activities in 1992 when police contacted officials expressing concern that blood, urine and tissue samples were being stored in what they considered to be hazardous conditions. But attempts to close down his clinic failed.

Onubogu duped a Californian based university into giving him qualifications by sending them photocopies of research papers written by eminent doctors which he passed off as his own work.

Another blow to tarnished image of the paid witness

By FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE bogus activities of Godwin Onubogu have dealt a fresh blow to the image of paid witnesses who play a key role in court rulings.

Onubogu claimed to be a scientific expert, one of the growing industry of expert witnesses whose members have been struggling with some success to rid the profession of its "hired gun" image and assert professional standards. But, despite efforts by bodies such as the Expert Witness Institute and the Academy of Expert Witnesses, in the eyes of the public the expert witness remains suspect.

Witnesses — paid or otherwise — still regularly come to grief in the courts. Mr Justice Phillips commented that an expert witness put forward by one side in an oil dispute, *Teacoo v Arco* in 1989, "needed to answer questions wildly, appearing to give expression to whatever thought entered his head".

Witnesses also came unstuck in the recent case against the *Evening Standard* brought by Alan Clark, the former Tory MP, over the newspaper's spoof diary, *Matthew Evans*, chairman of the Faber & Faber, and Donald Treford, former Editor of *The Observer*, faltered under cross-examination despite their knowledge. The judge,



Onubogu's surgery at Swan House, Balham, London

Mr Justice Lightman, caustically remarked: "Either the experts never seriously held the views expressed in forthright terms in their witness statements or, in the course of cross-examination, they experienced a revelation and conversion on a par with that of St Paul on the road to Damascus."

Money remains one problem for the expert witness. The work can be lucrative: an expert can charge £200 an hour and £1,000 for a report. Catherine Bond, a founder of the Expert Witness Institute and a partner with Bond Solon, which

has trained more than 9,000 professional experts — solicitors, accountants, doctors and bankers — said: "The Onubogu case is just the sort of case which gives expert witnesses a bad name, though I hasten to say we did not actually train this man."

She said that the public impression of expert witnesses was still that, if a client paid for a specific opinion, they were entitled to have it. "But we do try and emphasise on all our courses that experts are there to give their opinion and, if they are biased or give a distorted opinion, the judge will see through it and they are

also likely to collapse under cross-examination, which won't do the client any good."

Lord Woolf, the Master of the Rolls, in his landmark report on civil justice was harsh in his criticisms of expert evidence and the way "experts take on the role of partisan advocates instead of neutral fact finders or opinion givers". He has called for greater use of the single and neutral court-appointed expert, rather than each side calling their own.

Since then, the Law Society has taken steps to improve the standing of experts and has published a directory of Expert Witnesses with 3,500 names, emphasising the importance to litigants of choosing an independent expert.

But witnesses themselves remain ambivalent about what they should say in court. A survey by Bond Solon in October 1997 of some 500 expert witnesses found that two thirds were asked to change their opinion in some way by the solicitor, although some of these changes were merely factual.

And nearly one third of the witnesses did make the changes, a worrying finding in light of the Government's expansion of "no win, no fee" work. Ms Solon says. In such cases, they will be paid only if they win a case. Will this, she says, be a fresh incentive for experts to tailor their opinions?

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Woman killed in daylight attack

By HELEN JOHNSTONE

A YOUNG bank clerk stabbed to death less than 50 yards from her home in broad daylight as she went to catch a bus to work may have been the victim of a robbery that went wrong.

Ruksana Begum, 21, had just left her home in Handsworth, Birmingham, and was walking down an alley when she was attacked at 8.30am. She staggered to the nearby street where she collapsed in the gutter after alerting shopkeepers. She was pronounced dead on arrival at Birmingham's City Hospital.

Detective Superintendent Malcolm Ross of West Midlands Police, who is leading the murder inquiry, said that a post-mortem examination found Miss

Begum had died from multiple stab wounds. He said the motive for the attack on Miss Begum, who worked at a branch of the Trustee Savings Bank, remained a mystery, but her handbag had not been taken.

DS Ross said the killing may have been the result of a robbery that went wrong. "There is no reason at this stage to think that there is anything more to it than that. This seems to be a senseless killing of a very respectable girl."

Friends of Miss Begum said she had been troubled by a man who had become infatuated with her and was believed to have made romantic advances. She was in the process of having an arranged

marriage according to Bangladeshi custom and her family had attempted to protect her from the man's threatening behaviour.

Police yesterday made house-to-house inquiries and scenes of crime officers conducted a search of the area. One resident described seeing Miss Begum stumbling from the alley holding her stomach with blood on her hands.

A spokesman for the TSB said: "The overall emotion is one of bewilderment and shock. Her colleagues are deeply upset. She was an extremely likeable and valued member of staff and will be greatly missed by everybody who worked with her and knew her."

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The cat's whiskers: Sprit

Meningitis vaccine to be ready in two years

Trials indicate that injection could eliminate strain most often found in students, writes Ian Murray

AN EFFECTIVE vaccine against the strain of meningitis most common among university students could be ready within two years. Trials are well advanced and the results are "very exciting", according to David Salisbury, the Department of Health's Principal Medical Officer.

The vaccine is against group C meningitis, the strain behind outbreaks last year at Southampton, Cardiff and Leicester universities. In recent years there has been an increase in the proportion of cases of this strain compared with group B meningitis, and they tend to occur in schools, closed or semi-closed communities, such as convents or universities.

Dr Salisbury said yesterday that £1 million had been spent on vaccine research over the past year, with trials carried out on different age groups. Babies under two months old given the vaccine had developed "fantastic levels of antibodies with remarkably little reaction", he said. Other trials being evaluated had been carried out on entire school populations.

"This is probably the leading valuation of the vaccine anywhere in the world and the results for group C are very exciting. We are within touching distance of preventing C cases occurring. A vaccine for group C exists, but it is not used on babies under 18 months — the most likely age group to catch the disease — and it offers only 80 per cent protection for a short period to anyone older. It is not recommended for general use, although students at the three universities that suffered outbreaks are being offered it as a precaution. Dr Salisbury said that work on a vaccine for the group B infection was also going well, although this was proving a far more complicated process. Although the group C vaccine should complete trials in the next two years, it would take significantly longer to produce an effective one for group B.

He said that, although cases among students gained the most publicity, incidence of the disease was highest among babies under a year. Numbers dropped until the age of 13 and there was then a second, but smaller, peak of cases between 15 and 18.

The 1,612 cases including 241 deaths reported last year was the highest total since the Second World War, but he said there were signs now that this level had peaked and numbers were starting to fall. So far this year there have been 885 cases, including 107 deaths to the end of June.

Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, said that public awareness of the illness was helping to decrease the figures because people and GPs were more alert to the symptoms. "This is the time of year when cases start to increase and people need to be alert to the danger."

"The presence of a vaccine against meningococcal meningitis is getting closer but until it is available people must beware. Anything flu-like outside the flu season should be treated with great care."

Julia Warren, of the Meningitis Research Foundation, said that, with the number of cases in the 15-to-20 age group having risen steeply, young people had to be especially aware of the problem.

Magnetic man can't resist attraction of \$1m prize

A MAN who says he can pick up metal objects with his forehead is among 13 Britons competing for a \$1 million prize on offer to anyone who can prove that the paranormal exists. Other competitors include four who say they have "psychic helpers", several who believed they could contact the spirit world and some dowisers.

The prize is being offered by James Randi, who was formerly a professional conjurer and is now a debunker of psychic claims. Mr Randi, who runs the James Randi Educational Foundation based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, was introduced to the British Association for the Advancement of Science festival in Cardiff by Professor Richard Dawkins, of Oxford University.

He said he was there to meet the contestants. Already one, a woman in Glasgow who had claimed that she was able to read hidden cards, has fallen by the wayside. John Beloff, of Edinburgh University, interviewed the woman last week on behalf of Mr Randi. He reported back saying that she had no extra-sensory perception whatsoever.

Mr Randi said the woman, who was not named, would probably rally from her disappointment. "These people believe, after they have been tested, that they do not have a special power. But give them 24 hours and they spring right back. They say maybe they had eaten a bad pork chop, it was late Thursday and I do not work well late Thursday or it was too damp."

In what is possibly Mr Randi's best-known investigation, he refuted

some 80,000 registered practitioners in America, charging \$60 for a 20-minute treatment, who "go into treatment rooms and pass their hands over the bodies of ill people to even out their human energy field. They go 'Ooh, yes you have a strong energy field' and pocket the money."

He said weeping virgins were rife across the world, as were bleeding ones. Mr Randi said a DNA test of the blood from one bleeding virgin statue in Italy had shown that the blood was from a male. "The priest said that was because she was weeping the blood of her son."

His foundation, set up with a gift from an anonymous businessman, is funding work in schools where pupils and teachers are encouraged to think critically about scientific claims. Last night Mr Randi renewed

British Association Promoting Science & Technology

Reports by Nigel Hawkes and Nick Nuttall

research, published in the journal *Nature*, that appeared to prove that homeopathic remedies worked. He exposed the French scientist involved as a fraud.

The latest craze in the United States, which Mr Randi is investigating, is called "therapeutic touch" and is described by Mr Randi as "a form of witchcraft". He said there were

Gene 'saves girls from unsocial behaviour'

GIRLS may be protected against unsocial behaviour by a gene they inherit from their fathers, the festival was told.

Boys, who are not protected by the gene, are at least four times more likely to develop difficulties in social relationships and in recognising what other people are feeling — the extreme form of which is autism.

Professor David Skuse, of the Institute of Child Health at University College London, who last year published evidence suggesting that the differences in sociability between boys and girls might have a genetic basis, believes that the genes also provide the best explanation for autism.

Yesterday Professor Skuse proposed that a protective gene on the X chromosome explained not the existence of autism, but the fact that it was four times more common in boys than in girls.

This gene would have to be of a special sort, called an imprinted gene, which means it can be switched on when inherited from either father or mother, but not both. In this case, the gene would be the type switched on only when inherited from the father.

Such genes are "silent" in those who carry them, but are passed on in active form to their children. Thus, daughters would be protected, even though their fathers, in whom the gene was silent, would not be.



Jeremy Austin with a piece of shell from the "racing" tortoises of the Mascarenes

DNA shows secrets of a fast race of tortoises

THE fastest tortoises that ever lived had their family tree traced in bones they left in caves in the Mascarene Islands of the Indian Ocean.

DNA extracted from the bones has shown how the "racing tortoises" — which may have been able to break into a trot — spread from Africa to the islands of Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues, Jeremy Austin, of the Natural History Museum, told the festival.

Unlike the giant tortoises that survive today in the Seychelles — which are so heavy they can hardly move — the racers were lightly armoured, probably because there were no predators on the islands until human beings arrived in the 17th century. At the time, contemporary accounts say, tortoises were so numerous that people could walk hundreds of yards from shell to shell without touching the ground.

Many were eaten, while introduced species such as dogs, pigs and feral goats killed the rest. By 1800, all were extinct.

Dr Austin collected bones and shells from caves where the animals were washed by the tides and died. He then extracted mitochondrial DNA and analysed the differences between samples and islands.

The results show that all the tortoises had a single ancestor, which probably ventured too close to the breakers on the shores of Africa and was swept out to sea. That tortoise, probably a female ready to lay her eggs, reached one of the islands and found it free of predators. From her clutch the tortoises evolved into two types, one that cropped the ground and another that could raise its head to feed on bushes.

"This is the real use of ancient DNA to understand evolution, not to try to reconstruct species in a hyped-up Jurassic Park way," Dr Austin said.

Good sex may help women to conceive

WOMEN are more likely to become pregnant when they enjoy sex, a new study has found. The finding contradicts claims by some researchers that the female orgasm has little or no biological function.

A team from the University of Cardiff found that women retained more active sperm when sex had been pleasurable. The difference may be crucial for some couples who are having difficulties in conceiving because of low fertility.

The research was led by Jacky Boivin, of the university's school of biology, who said: "The findings may have important implications for infertile couples. In such couples, lovemaking frequently occurs under stressful conditions as it is determined by the fertile period rather than sexual desire."

A group of 103 women in their mid-30s were asked to give a satisfaction rating for their last sexual encounter. Within two or three hours of the event, they were also given a post-coital test.

Researchers found that the women who rated the sex the highest, including having an orgasm, retained more sperm in the cervix. Among women in the lowest satisfaction category, 47.1 per cent had a post-coital test score of zero.

There were two main theories to explain the possible link. The team suggests that the spasms of orgasm may draw in the sperm. In addition, Dr Boivin said, "arousal has been shown to reduce the acidic environment of the vagina. This is important as the pH balance in the cervix has been shown to impact on the sperm's survival."

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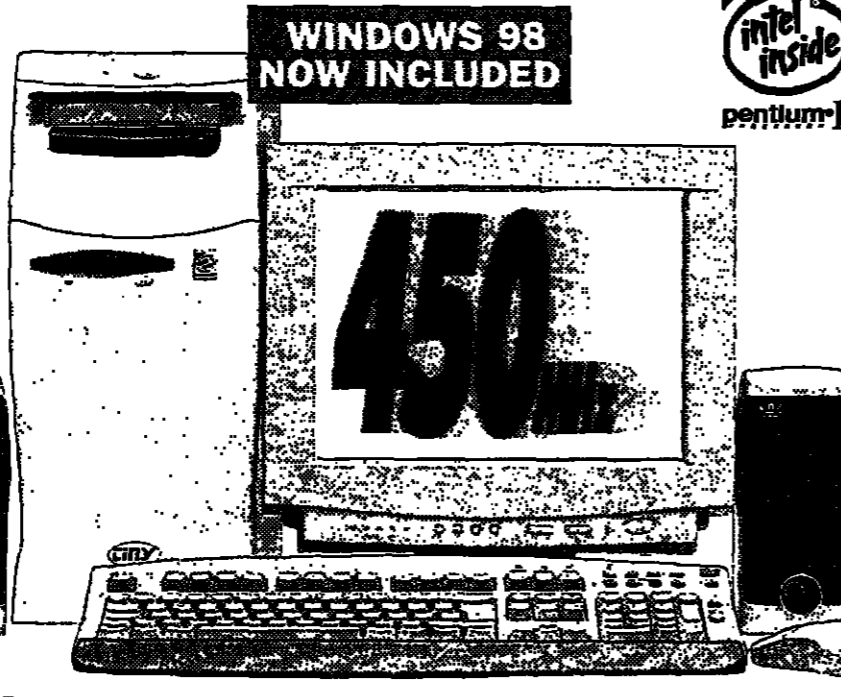
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Geologist attacks climate claims

AN ADVISER to the Government said yesterday that some scientists and politicians were "talking rubbish" about global warming.

David Bowen, a geologist at Cardiff University and vice-chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales, said that the computer models on which claims about the effects of man-made pollution were based were deeply flawed. There was evidence that the Earth had gone through repeated and often rapid periods of warming and cooling over the past two million years, well before pollution caused by man could have had any impact.

"There have been changes in the surface sea temperature of up to three degrees centigrade, which dwarfs those predicted for 2100," he said. Other studies showed that, in Greenland, temperatures have varied between five and ten degrees over periods of a thousand years.

Yet this natural variability in the climate, recorded in Arctic and Antarctic ice cores, was ignored in the computer models used to forecast the impact of man-made pollution on the Earth's weather systems, he said, which was little short of scandalous.

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Patten questions wisdom of Tory ballot on Europe

Philip Webster on a call for honourable compromise

CHRIS PATTEN yesterday effectively ruled out serving in William Hague's Shadow Cabinet because of his policy on the European single currency.

The former chairman of the Conservative Party, who has shown interest in returning to the Commons, said that he disagreed with Mr Hague's stance of discounting British membership for this Parliament and the next even though he had "considerable reservations" about the euro.

Mr Patten was asked on *The World at One* whether, if he was in the Shadow Cabinet, he would have to subscribe to Mr Hague's line. Asked whether he would do so, he said: "No. I do not agree with it."

However, Mr Hague has won widespread backing across the party for his decision to call a ballot, with John Major and Lord Lamont of Lerwick, the former Chancel-

lor, supporting his idea. Conservative Central Office reported that local associations were being "inundated" with inquiries from people wishing to join the party so that they could vote, or seeking to renew their membership. People have to be members for three months to qualify to vote.

At a Shadow Cabinet strategy session in Buckinghamshire, Mr Hague urged front-benchers to work hard to secure a clear majority "to give the party the certainty it craves."

The Shadow Cabinet gave unanimous backing to Mr Hague. In a statement it said that "each one of us will spend the coming weeks travelling round the country, campaigning alongside William Hague for a 'yes' vote in the ballot."

Mr Hague today begins a whistle-stop tour to sell his policy. He will speak in London today and move on over the next three weeks to all parts of Britain. There are expected to be at least 100

events organised to support his policy.

Yesterday he said: "Nobody should take the next election for granted. And the best way for the Conservative Party to set about winning the next election is to sort out this problem that has dogged us for years, to confront it, to deal with it and to move on."

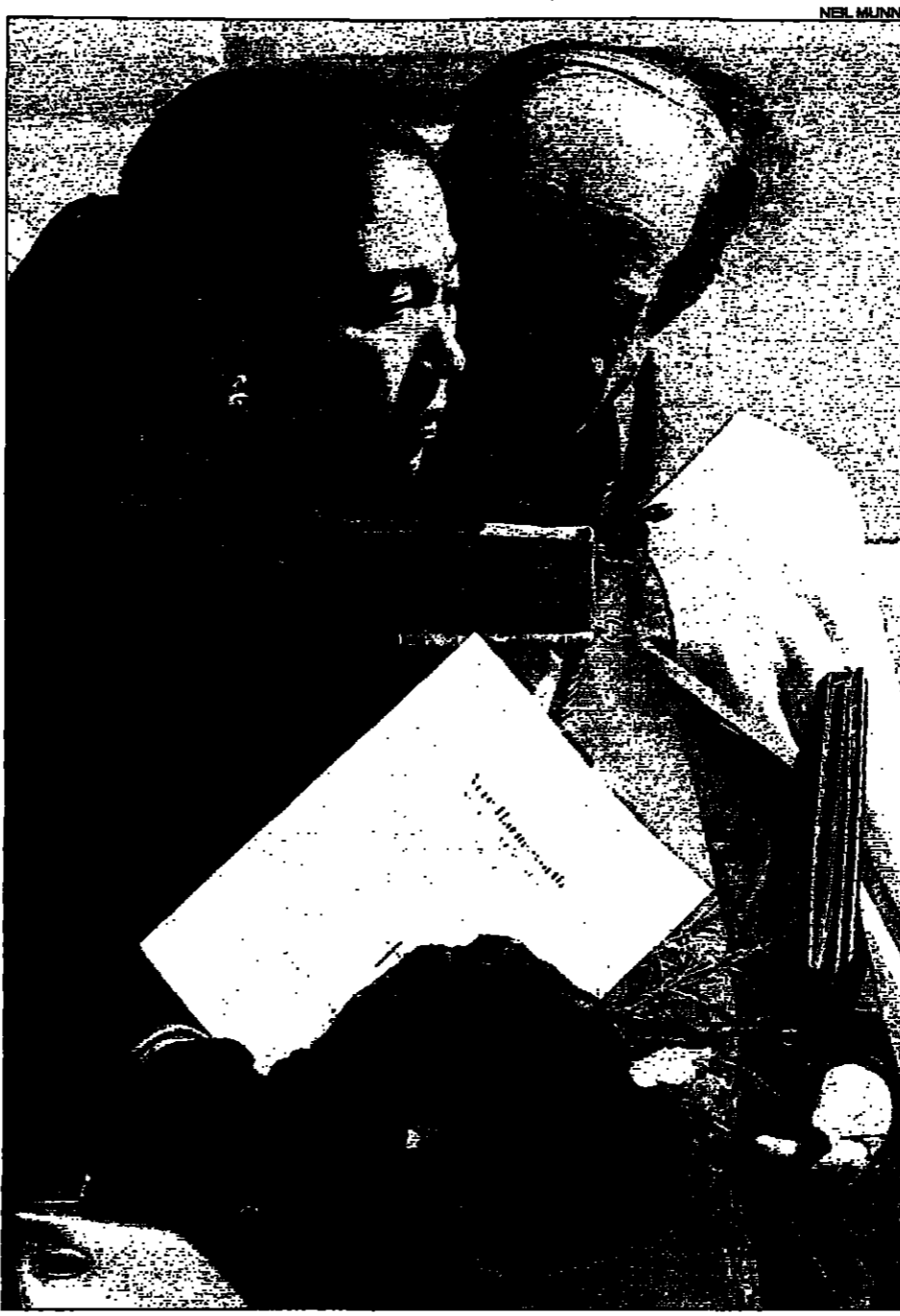
Mr Major, whose own leadership was blighted by infighting on Europe, supported Mr Hague's decision and urged everyone in the party to abide by the outcome. "The Conservative Party must ensure its voice is heard against a Government that is now making serious mistakes," he said. "This means European policy must be settled and accepted. We cannot afford a continuation of the disputes that crippled us in the last Parliament."

Lord Lamont said: "William Hague's decision to hold a party referendum on the single currency is brave and bold. He will surely get support from the overwhelming majority of party members. This should settle the issue once and for all."

Mr Patten said everyone shared Mr Hague's desire to end divisions. He added: "The vote will go William's way but I don't think the debate is over. I would much prefer us to have tried to find an honourable compromise which would have put off any final decision and let the party fight, if it came to that, on different sides of a referendum while being totally united in a general election to get rid of the Blair Government."



Patten: he vowed to vote against Mr Hague's line



Canon John Oates comforting the Dowager Lady Rothermere at yesterday's funeral

Son's moving tribute to Lord Rothermere

By Raymond Snoddy, Media Editor

THE successor to the title of Viscount Rothermere told mourners at his father's funeral yesterday that his death had been "the loss of a voice within us".

Jonathan Harnsworth, the 4th Viscount, said: "What a terrible and sad loss it is to lose a father. What a father he was, not only to us, but to his newspapers. The essence of paternalism: kind but firm, wise and generous."

"I have lost my best friend and mentor. But I will have my memories and his grandchildren to remember him by."

Lord Rothermere said that his father loved the gossip of journalists and the Machiavellian games of Fleet Street, and also spoke about his father's "complex, fiery and passionate" love for his mother and his "gentle and strong" love for his widow, Maiko, the Korean former model who became his second wife.

Tony Blair and William Hague were among the mourners yesterday at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, where *Ulysses*, the poem by Tennyson, was read to the mourners by John Heringway, an old friend of the late peer.

The chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, Lord Wakeham, said that Lord Rothermere would have been proud of his son's address. "I thought it was a

beautiful service. I will remember both Jonathan's address and the reading of *Ulysses* for many, many years."

Lord Rothermere, the last of the great aristocratic newspaper proprietors, who chaired the Daily Mail and General Trust and had steered the *Daily Mail* since 1973, died of a heart attack last week, aged 73.

Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief executive of the News Corporation, the parent company of *The Times*, joined Paul Dacre, Editor-in-Chief of Associated Newspapers, Jonathan Holborow, Editor of the *Mail on Sunday* and Max Hastings, Editor of the *Evening Standard*, at the funeral.

On June 22, Lord Rothermere had stood in St Bride's to give a moving address to mark the death of his friend and colleague, Sir David English, who transformed the *Daily Mail*. Yesterday, the new Lord Rothermere stood on the same spot and spoke of the loss of his father.

The funeral was followed by a cremation. The ashes of Lord Rothermere are likely to be scattered in Britain, France and Korea.

Today the board of the Daily Mail and General Trust is due to meet and elect his son, 30, as its next chairman unless he personally decides the responsibility has come too soon.

Shepherds may hold genetic clue to Parkinson's disease

By Ian Murray, Medical Correspondent

RESEARCHERS are trying to trace descendants of a 17th-century family of shepherds who may have inherited a gene that makes them prone to develop Parkinson's disease.

Over the past two years a team at the Institute of Neurology in London, including four neurogeneticists and two genealogists has tracked down three generations who are suffering from the disease. Although the earliest records of the family have been found in Lincolnshire, the team has traced other members in Leicestershire, Essex and Stoke-on-Trent, a number of

whom suffer from the neurological disorder.

"It is rare for two or more members of the same family to have the disease so it is very helpful to find several who come from the same one," said Naheed Khan, one of the research team. She has placed an advertisement in a Lincolnshire newspaper asking for anyone with a family history of the disease to get in touch with the institute.

"The family we have identified is not responsible for Parkinson's disease, but by identifying descendants we will be able to get a better

understanding of it," she said. She said that the disease was caused by environmental and genetic factors. While considerable work had been done on the environmental causes there had not been much research on the genetic aspects.

"We feel we are close to a conclusion, but we need more people to come forward to be tested. Our appeal for help is to trace more members of this family and other families which have a history of the disease," Dr Khan said.

The Parkinson's Disease Society is sponsoring the research with a £200,000 grant.

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	£10,000	17.9%	£238.09	£14,280.00
	£15,000	17.9%	£258.48	£16,268.88
LLOYDS	£1,000	13.8%	£27.95	£1,347.80
	£10,000	13.8%	£216.75	£13,162.80
	£15,000	13.8%	£237.15	£15,138.80
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Pupils hit the beat in a virtual crime city

By Russell Jenkins

CHILDREN can now learn about youth crime and good citizenship on the mean streets of a virtual reality city rife with drug use, joyriding and theft.

Teenagers will find out how to avoid a mugging and solve crimes, and what it is like for police officers to face public order offences, from the safety of their computer seats.

Greater Manchester Police yesterday unveiled a virtual reality computer package designed to enable young people to experience the threat of real-life crime and learn the consequences of their actions.

The interactive package, *VR Crime Conquest*, is being distributed to secondary schools in Manchester and is likely to become a part of the curriculum 12 and 13-year-olds around Britain. Interest is also growing in the US and Europe.

Pupils step into Virtual Reality City, where they come face-to-face with several hazardous situations. They can be asked to react in a number of roles, including those of a witness and a police officer. Moving through the city, they can make arrests or summon help. They make their own judgments on how to deal with a problem and learn the consequences.

In one program, *Trouble with Youths*, they are ordered to Birch Avenue, where a public disorder has been reported. When they arrive, they find a group of youths openly smoking cannabis. The player has five choices and a friendly talking-to is not the right answer. In another, the player sees a joyrider - called a "grief rider" in the program - knock down a pedestrian. Most players knock on the nearest door to find the house empty, then try the vandalised public telephone. Professor

Robert Stone, the commercial director of Virtual Presence, the company which developed the software, said a common reaction at that point was to panic.

"They say they have had enough of this: 'I have done my best, I'm going home' and so they leg it, leaving the injured man with his right leg twitching, and blood going down the drain," he said.

Other programs deal with arson, shoplifting and how to stay safe on the way home from the disco. Pre-launch trials were staged at Sale Grammar School. Jennifer Connolly, the head teacher, said that the school was now looking to make it a permanent part of the syllabus for Year 8 pupils.

"Youngsters love computers and I suppose their initial reaction was that this was going to be some sort of game. Then they realise there is a strong educational element," she said. "They find themselves in situations where they have to make decisions that can be difficult or distressing. It allows them to make the decision and find out what the consequences will be."

Kate Hoey, a Home Office Under-Secretary of State, said: "It is vital that we use whatever tools are available in order to educate our young people in what are the best ways of dealing with challenging and difficult situations. What better than allowing them to learn in the safety of their homes or classrooms?"

David Wilmoth, the GMP Chief Constable, said the programme grew from an idea based on the children's television programme *The Crystal Maze*. The next generation of the CD-Rom is being developed to incorporate the Crime and Disorder Act.



The ghost shirt on display in Glasgow. It was brought to the city by Buffalo Bill

Sioux shirt to be tested for massacre blood

By Gillian Harris
SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

FORENSIC scientists are to test a blood-stained shirt ripped from the back of a fallen Indian warrior during the Massacre of Wounded Knee in South Dakota more than a century ago to decide its final resting place.

The shirt, worn by a member of a Sioux religious cult, was brought to Glasgow by Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West travelling show in 1891, a year after the massacre. It was handed over to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum with other Indian artefacts the following year.

But now councillors in Glasgow must decide whether or not to repatriate the "ghost shirt" at the request of the Lakota Sioux Indians who regard it as a sacred relic. At a meeting of Glasgow City Council's arts and culture committee yesterday, councillors voted to postpone their decision until after forensic tests have been carried out and the public has been given an opportunity to express its views. If the ghost shirt is sent back to America, it will be one of the most high-profile historic objects to leave a British



Buffalo Bill in action at Wounded Knee

museum. Elizabeth Cameron, the convener of the arts and culture committee, said: "You can't rush into something like this. It is the first time it has been done and we shall proceed with caution."

Indian warriors believed the eagles and buffalo embroidered on the sleeves of ghost shirts shielded them from enemy bullets. But the ghost shirts offered little protection when soldiers from the 7th Cavalry opened fire on the defenceless Sioux at Wounded Knee Creek in December 1890.

More than 200 Indians were slaughtered in the final battle between white soldiers

and native Indians. Afterwards America was deemed safe for settlement. But the spot where the warriors, including the Indian chief Crazy Horse, died became a sacred site.

The shirt was spotted five years ago in the Kelvingrove gallery by John Earl, an American tourist of Cherokee descent, who reported his find to the Wounded Knee Survivors' Association, a group which campaigns for the rights of Sioux Indians. Its members wrote to Julian Spalding, then director of Glasgow Museums, asking for the shirt to be returned. When Mr Spalding refused, the survivors appealed to Glasgow City Council who insisted that councillors would make the final decision.

Yesterday Mark O'Neill, the head of curatorial services at Glasgow Museums, said a forensic examination would show where the blood on the shirt came from. According to Sioux legend, the blood is that of an Indian warrior but Mr O'Neill said: "After the massacre there was a huge souvenir hunt and some of the shirts had chicken blood put on them."

Boyfriend 'gave model fatal drug injection'

A TELEVISION actress and former Page Three model died after her boyfriend gave her a fatal injection of heroin, the Old Bailey heard yesterday (Stewart Tendler writes).

Debbie Linden, 36, had modelled and acted in television commercials and sitcoms. She had also become



Linden: abused drugs

an alcoholic and used drugs, but could not inject them herself. She died last October at the home of Russell Ainsworth, her boyfriend, minutes after he was seen by her brother Neil to give her an injection. After she became unconscious her breathing stopped and she was taken to hospital. Her life-support machine later switched off.

Ainsworth, 27, from Kingston, Surrey, pleaded not guilty to manslaughter and supplying a controlled drug. Sallie Bennett-Jenkins, for the prosecution, said that Ainsworth had divided the heroin into two portions and tied a tourniquet to Miss Linden's arm. Almost immediately she started to collapse. She was interviewed by police. Ainsworth denied he had given her the injection.

The trial continues.



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Daimler-Benz has developed the first-ever fuel cell car to use methanol as the fuel. Based on the Mercedes A-class, the revolutionary new vehicle represents a decisive breakthrough in the quest to develop a drive system with extremely low emissions.

The car, known as NECAR3 (New Electric Car), fills up with liquid methanol. With the aid of a reformer system located in the rear of the vehicle, the methanol is converted on-line into hydrogen through water-vapour reformation. The hydrogen gas is then fed into the fuel cells where it is combined with atmospheric oxygen - but without combustion - to directly produce electrical energy used to power the vehicle.

Previous fuel cell systems could only operate in conjunction with bulky hydrogen tanks for fuel storage. With NECAR3, the entire process is much more direct: press the accelerator pedal and an astonishing 90 percent of the system's power is available in just two seconds. In terms of driving dynamics, this puts fuel cell vehicles using methanol on a par with conventional petrol or diesel-powered cars.

Dispensing with the hydrogen tanks not only reduces vehicle weight, but it also greatly improves the everyday practicality of the new vehicle: petrol stations can theoretically handle methanol, which doesn't require special safety measures, nearly as easily as petrol or diesel. What's more, NECAR3 has a range of some 250 miles on a tank of 8.7 gallons of methanol - similar to conventional vehicles.

Daimler-Benz decided to opt for methanol because it is the most suitable fuel for hydrogen generation. Although petrol and diesel were also considered, the efficiency levels of these fuels would have been lower. For the introductory phase of fuel-cell powered vehicles at least, engineers are considering the possibility of a multi-fuel concept which, as the name suggests, would permit the use of different types of fuel until methanol is widely available.

The drive system of NECAR3 is virtually emission-free. Neither nitrogen oxides nor soot particles are created during conversion of methanol to hydrogen or in the subsequent generation of electrical energy. And thanks to the extreme efficiency of the fuel cells, carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions are substantially below those of conventional cars.

With the advent of onboard hydrogen generation, a crucial step has been taken towards developing the environmentally friendly fuel cell technology that could eventually power vehicles of the future. An equally important milestone on the road to this lofty goal is the incorporation of the entire system into the 3.57 m long A-class. Once again, the innovative double-floor sandwich concept employed in the A-class has proved its worth, allowing the complete installation of the fuel cells and several auxiliary units underneath the passenger cell.

The methanol fuel tank, reformer and control system are located in the rear of the car.

The methanol reformer technology in NECAR3 has benefited from a wide range of technological advances at Daimler-Benz. Not only has the system been made smaller and more efficient, but the performance and dynamic response of the reformation process have also been improved.

The result is a compact unit of some 18 inches in height. Located in the rear of the A-class, the reformer directly injects hydrogen into the fuel cells. Hydrogen production occurs at a temperature of 280° centigrade: methanol and water vaporize to give hydrogen (H), carbon dioxide (CO2), and carbon monoxide (CO).

The hydrogen protons travel through the polymer membrane while the electrons travel through an external circuit to arrive at the positive electrode. There, the oxygen, hydrogen protons and electrons combine to form water. An electric motor attached to the external circuit is then used to drive the vehicle.

Fuel cell cars represent one facet of the wealth of research and development being carried out by Daimler-Benz into the way that cars and other forms of transport can be improved for the future. If these advances continue with the same speed as they do currently, we could be driving fuel cell cars by 2004. For more information, contact the Mercedes-Benz website at www.mercedes-benz.co.uk

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Long-distance soldiers surrender to the rain

Simon de Bruxelles on an embarrassing end to an army march for charity

SIX soldiers who set out to walk from John o'Groats to Land's End have abandoned their long march before reaching the Scottish border. They threw in the towel after three dropped out with muscle strains within a couple of hundred miles of the start of the walk.

The organiser, a sergeant major in the Royal Logistic Corps, yesterday blamed rain and slippery roads for turning his troops into the walking wounded. The soldiers, who had been hoping to raise hundreds of pounds for charity, were taking it in turns to walk in combat gear for two hours while their colleagues followed behind in a van.

When the team posed confidently for a photograph at start of the non-stop charity walk, they knew that Britain's longest route had been completed on stilt, in wheelchairs and on a motorised lavatory. Even Jimmy Savile had done it. They set off at a breezy six



Army boots have Goretex lining and air-cushioned soles

miles an hour with high hopes of reaching Land's End, 873 miles away by the most direct route, in eight days. Just two days into the march, however, two of the soldiers suffered hamstring injuries and a third pulled a muscle in his thigh. The remaining three tried to continue the walk but eventually decided they were beaten

by the time they reached Perth, 240 miles after the start of the walk.

Sergeant Major Paul Woods, who planned the walk to raise money for Tewkesbury Hospital and the Crohn's in Childhood Research Appeal, said: "The rain was horrendous. We were all slipping and that is how people

ended up with torn muscles and things.

"We planned to march in shifts of two hours on and four hours off, but with only three of us walking, it was just too much. By the time we had walked 240 miles, we knew we were just not going to make it.

"We all put a lot of work into preparing, and it was a real shame, but we just have to put it behind us and try again when everyone has recovered from their injuries.

"It will probably be next year now before we can do anything."

The soldiers are all based at the Army's central vehicle depot at Ashchurch near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire. Last night, they were preparing to beat the retreat on the parade ground and were unavailable for comment.

Captain Rosie Stone, an Army spokeswoman, said: "There are two sides to every story. They were accompanied by an Army medic who advised them if they continued



Lieutenant Corporal Arwyn Efans, Sergeant Major Paul Woods, Sergeant Ian Mellor and Staff Sergeant Phil Moran

walking at the same pace, they would all end up injured. They were due to take part in a major exercise for which it was vital they were fit and military duties had to come first."

If there is one thing the soldiers cannot blame their injuries on, it is the standard-

issue British Army boot. The traditional 'ammo' boot with hobnails and inch-thick leather soles has been replaced everywhere but on the parade ground by waterproof Goretex linings, speed-lacing and air-cushioned soles.

The Ministry of Defence said: "The traditional army

boot has been transformed over the past 15 years and can now compete with any civilian boot. 'Ammo' boots are still useful for drill because they make a lot of noise and it is easy to keep in step. Thick leather soles also have their own cushioning effect. But the army is aware that many

young people these days grow up in trainers and their feet just are not used to properly made leather shoes, let alone boots.

"That is why during basic training, we now make a gradual transition from trainers to boots to try to cut the risk of muscle injuries."

Hessian kept the blisters at bay

By HANNAH BETTS AND PETER FOSTER

AN ARMY may march on its stomach but walkers who attempt the 873-mile trek from Land's End to John o'Groats know that the first consideration must be their feet.

Those who have attempted the walk have found a variety of ways of keeping the blisters away. The hobbling soldiers of Ashchurch, who set out in standard issue black army boots, might have fared better if they had followed the example of Barbara Moore, the 1960s vegetarian campaigner who completed the walk at the age of 56. She wrapped her feet in hessian sacking tied with twine.

The former England cricketer Ian Botham, who has completed the walk seven times for charity, favoured the sports training shoe which minimises blisters but are best left outside overnight.

The sportswear manufacturer Nike recommends the latest hybrid shoe, a cross between a walking boot and a running shoe. Their top model costs about £80 but, according to Graham Anderson, the marketing manager, should last the distance.

The walk from John o'Groats to Land's End is successfully completed by between 3,000-4,000 people every year. Had they survived the 873-mile trek the six sol-



Barbara Moore did the walk at age of 56

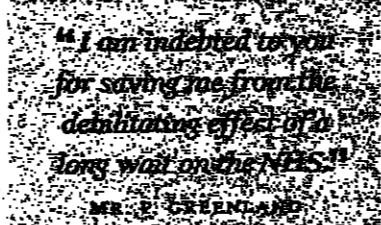
diers would have been inducted into the Hall of Fame which has been established at Land's End to honour finishers and tend to aching limbs.

As they return to face the ridicule of their regiment they may find it encouraging to know that the record for the fastest walk is held by a soldier. Warrant Officer Malcolm Barnish of the 19th Regiment, Royal Artillery, completed the course in only twelve days in 1986. He was eclipsed only by the holder of the running record - 10 days two hours - set by Briton Richard Brown in May 1995.

Long NHS hospital waiting lists seem to be a fact of life these days. There are currently over 1.2 million people waiting for treatment and many of those are having to spend weeks, months, even years with painful conditions - not knowing when their turn for treatment will come round.

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WIFTEA

Disabled attack Labour review of rights law

By MARK HENDERSON

THE Government was accused last night of betraying the disabled and handing employers a licence to discriminate with a "piffling and pathetic" review of employment rights legislation.

Campaigners for the disabled said the decision by Margaret Hodge, the Disability Minister, to lower the threshold at which businesses must observe discrimination legislation from 20 employees to 15 was a "derisory" improvement that breached Labour's manifesto commitment to give full civil rights to disabled people.

Tom Clarke, Labour's disability spokesman in opposition, had attacked the Tories for including the threshold in the 1996 Disability Discrimination Act, and Mrs Hodge's predecessor Alan Howarth, promoted to Arts Minister in July's reshuffle, was widely believed to have accepted the case for lowering the threshold to two employees or abolishing it altogether.

Mrs Hodge's decision — her

first since her appointment — showed bad faith and effectively enshrined smaller employers' right to discriminate against the disabled, campaigners said. Some suggested that Mr Howarth had been moved from the brief because he was too sympathetic to their demands.

"This is a piffling and pathetic announcement which does almost nothing to help disabled people," said Rachel Hurst, chairwoman of Rights Now. "Labour were violently opposed to any kind of threshold in opposition, and leaving it in gives business a right to discriminate." Ms Hurst added that the Act would not compel businesses to employ disabled people where to do so would incur unreasonable expenses, a lift for example, even if the threshold were scrapped.

Sex and race discrimination legislation applies to all firms irrespective of size, and lowering the threshold to two would cost companies just £6.88 per employee, according to the Government's own figures. James Strachan, chief executive of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, said the "derisory" cut would exclude 95 per cent of employers from disability discrimination rules: "Despite the Government's fine words and promises, disabled people have once again been dealt a bitter blow in the fight against discrimination."

The Royal National Institute for the Blind said it was "deeply disappointed" that no action had been taken to tackle discrimination in small firms. "It can't be right that firms can actively discriminate against

disabled people when they can't do so on the grounds of race or gender," said a spokesman.

"The row will also hit Government claims that planned cuts in disability benefits would be matched by greater employment rights and opportunities for disabled people who want to work."

Mark Oaten, the Liberal Democrat disability spokesman, said: "In her first act as disability minister Hodge has bodged this legislation and let companies off the hook at the expense of disabled people."

Mrs Hodge said the extension of the Act would bring another 45,000 employers and 750,000 employees under its umbrella. "It will ensure that disabled people working in these firms have their rights protected and promoted in the same way as disabled people employed in larger firms."



Baroness Jay sets out to show that the problems of women are on her shoulders. In her first public appearance since the Cabinet reshuffle made her Minister for Women — along with Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of

Jay shoulders her new role

Lords — she was calling for more office responsibilities for women and trying out a new tension-relieving massager on her shoulders at the

opening of the Executive PA Show at the Business Design Centre in North London. Lady Jay called for personal assistants and

secretaries to be given clear career structures to enable them to progress to higher levels and be given more responsibility. Better training and support was needed to break down barriers and ease the career ladder, she said.



Hodge: her review was attacked as derisory

Ridings School education head forced to resign

By VICTORIA FLETCHER

THE head of the local education authority condemned after a breakdown of discipline at The Ridings School has been forced to resign after the Government threatened a takeover if he was not replaced.

Estelle Morris, the School Standards Minister, is believed personally to have demanded the removal of Ian Jennings, the Chief Education Officer at Calderdale council in West Yorkshire, as part of a wider purging of the troubled education department that will be implemented in the next few weeks.

The council has been dogged by problems with its education department in recent years. A series of inspections by Ofsted, the school standards watchdog, found it was repeatedly failing to provide adequate support for local schools, highlighted by the crisis at the Ridings School in Halifax in 1996.

A Government inspection branded the school "out of control" after a series of assaults and vandalism by pupils in 1996. The school was later forced to close for some days, after teachers refused to take lessons unless 60 known trouble-makers were expelled.

The Local Government Association had to intervene and provided an independent advisor, Simon Jenkin, who drew up radical plans to revive the authority. It is understood that

Mr Jenkin will now be asked to replace Mr Jennings as Chief Education Officer, to ensure the proposed changes are carried out effectively.

Yesterday a highly critical report by Mr Jenkin was given to Calderdale Education Committee, who will vote on Thursday on whether to accept its proposals for improvement.

In the report, Mr Jenkin suggests members of the department attend customer care training courses to learn how to be polite when dealing with schools, as well as the development of a team of school heads, governors and officers from the education department to develop strategies for local school improvement.

Councillor Bill Carpenter, leader of the Conservative Group in the council said: "I think that it is unlikely that Calderdale will reject any of the proposals in the report. I also think that because the reports' author was recommended by the Department and the LGA, that we should no longer fear a take-over by a Government hit squad. It is now not time to argue but time to improve."

An LGA spokesperson said yesterday: "There is still a mountain to climb for Calderdale in its bid to raise standards in education and great challenges still lie ahead."

SNP slipping back behind Labour

By GILLIAN HARRIS, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR has clawed back a slim lead over the Scottish National Party in the race for control of the Holyrood parliament, according to the latest opinion poll.

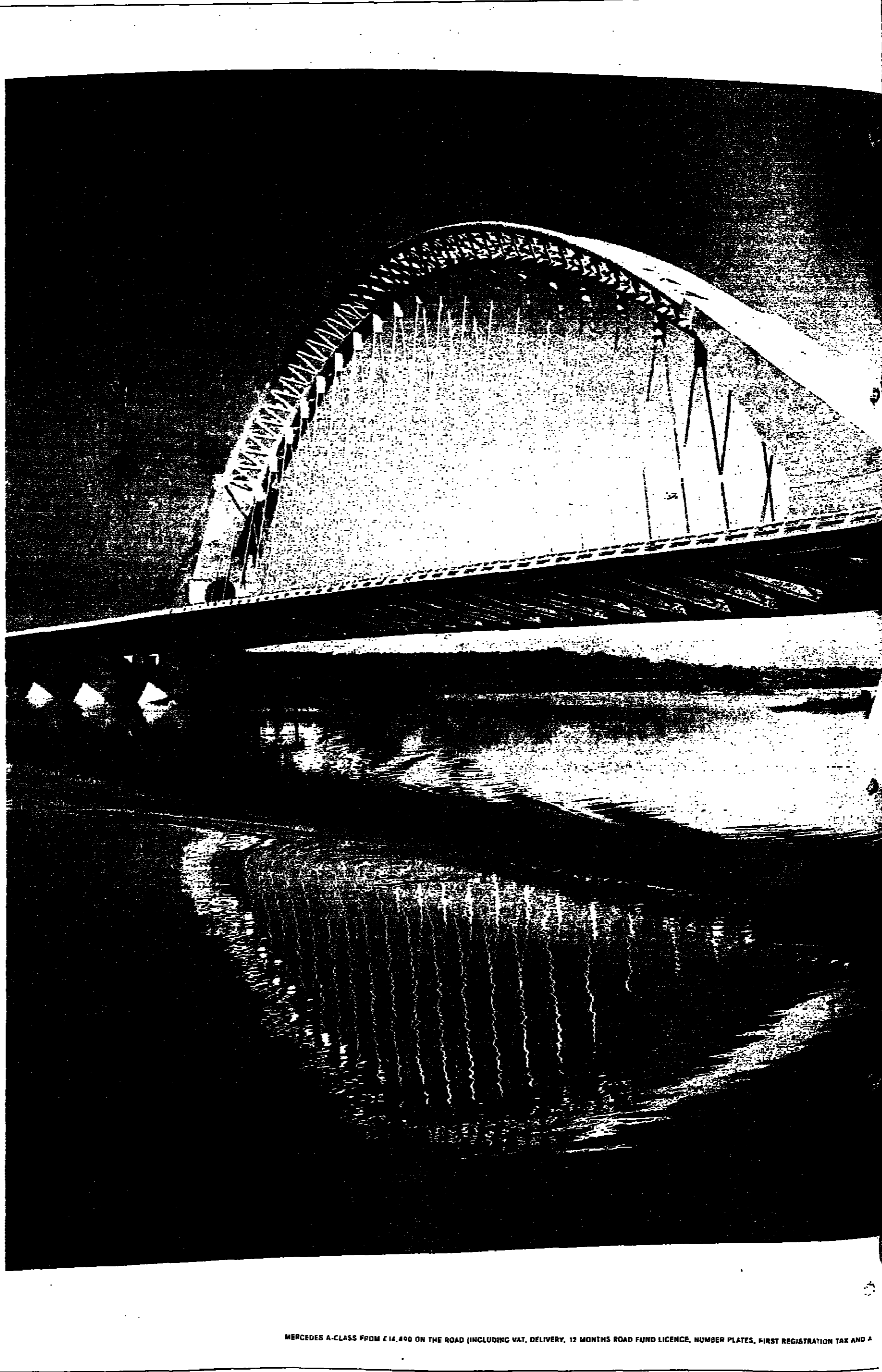
For the first time since Easter, Labour has overtaken the SNP in voting intentions for the constituency elections for the Scottish parliament. However, with Labour jumping one point to 41 per cent and the SNP slipping three to 38 per cent, neither party would hold an overall majority if the poll, conducted by System Three for the Glasgow-based Herald newspaper, was translated into seats.

Instead Labour, the biggest single party with 59 seats, would be forced to form a

coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. The pro-Union partners would then seek to block the SNP's demand for a referendum on independence during the parliament's first term.

The poll indicates a turn around in the SNP's fortunes following a 14 point surge during the summer. However in the proportional representation part of the vote for additional members, the SNP is still marginally ahead at 40 per cent, with Labour catching up on 39 per cent.

In both votes, the Tories stand at 11 per cent with the Liberal Democrats at 10 per cent for the constituency elections and 8 per cent for additional members.



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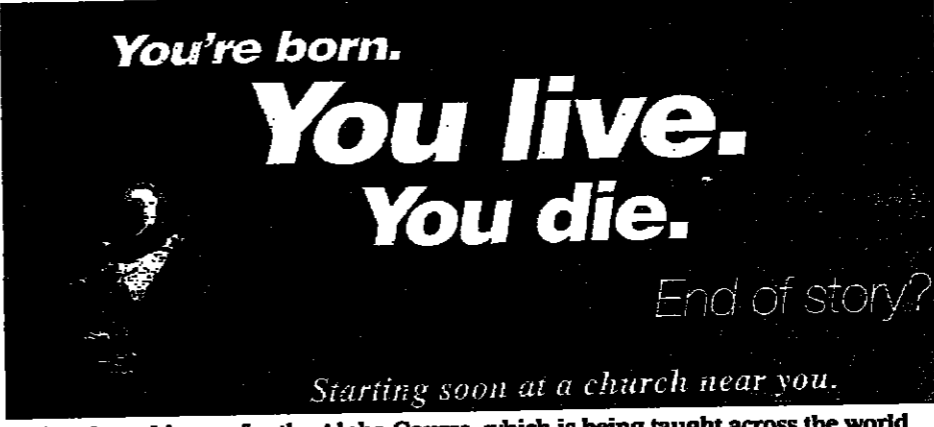
Church spreads word with £1m ad campaign

Dominic Kennedy on recordbreaking promotion for fundamentalist teachings

THE wealthiest parish church in Britain yesterday started the country's most expensive Christian advertising campaign — a £1 million poster and newspaper blitz that promotes the controversial Alpha movement.

The priests of Holy Trinity, Brompton, in West London, hope to win back Britain for Christ through a network of 4,000 churches that provide the Alpha Course, a ten-week introduction to Christianity using fundamentalist principles.

The churches aim to send every home in the country an invitation to the ecumenical course, which preaches the existence of the Devil and



Two of the posters that will appear on 5,500 sites around the country. They aim to create a brand image for the Alpha Course, which is being taught across the world

places an emphasis on healing, prophecy and miracles, including speaking in tongues.

The posters were conceived to promote the Alpha name and logo to improve recognition and interest, rather than selling a specific message.

One poster states: "9 to 5 for the next 30 years. Surely there's more to life?" The Alpha movement is trying to keep this poster out of areas of high unemployment. Another reads: "You're born. You live. You die. End of story?" Both carry the slogan:

"The Alpha Course. Starting soon at a church near you." There is no contact number on the advertisements. Leaflets will be delivered with details of local churches running the course.

A team of five from the advertising industry gave their time free to design the posters as part of their "Christian ministry". One of them was Francis Goodwin, managing director of Maiden Outdoor, which manages and owns poster sites. "We wanted people to feel that an Alpha course is a perfectly

normal thing to do," he said. "We needed to establish the Alpha name in the world outside the church community and to link its logo with the name, thus helping to create a brand image. We chose posters to give the campaign an impact at street level and to communicate with a large audience."

"We treated Alpha like any commercial client. For me there isn't a contradiction in using modern media techniques. Christ was a great communicator."

The creative team included

veterans of the much-derided Christmas 1996 poster for the Churches Advertising Network: "Bad Hair Day? You're a virgin, you've just given birth and now three kings have shown up."

The Alpha Course was founded 20 years ago at Holy Trinity, Brompton, which serves an affluent community near Harrods and has an annual income of £2.3 million. The parish has become the headquarters of an evangelical movement stretching from Argentina to New Zealand. An estimated 500,000

people have completed the course, including prisoners. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, has strongly supported the growth of Alpha. He applauded the plans for the advertising initiative.

Although originally an Anglican initiative, every Christian denomination is now involved including hundreds of Roman Catholic, Methodist and Baptist churches, and some Pentecostal churches. The main Christian denominations have a total of about 24,200 churches in Britain.

The posters will go up on 5,500 sites next Monday, backed by advertisements in 156 local newspapers.

The 4,000 churches each set out to raise £100 for the campaign. Ken Costa, an investment banker and church warden of Holy Trinity, was reluctant to give full financial details, but the £1 million includes work "in kind" by supporters.

Nicky Gumbel, curate at Holy Trinity, said: "Many young people today have no experience of church. We have seen the country mov-

ing through materialism. Sometimes there has been exploration into the New Age movement or whatever. A lot of people are saying, 'These things didn't satisfy. I wonder if there may be something in historic, orthodox Christianity.' Churches are growing significantly as a result of people coming to a personal faith in Christ through one of these courses."

The Alpha course discourages homosexuality, divorce and abortion and promotes celibacy outside marriage. Some liberal Christians fear that the Alpha movement is using its financial power to win more influence by ensuring converts are introduced to Christianity through its orthodox, evangelical path.

Mary Robins, an assistant priest at St James's in Piccadilly, said her church helped people who said they had been damaged by Alpha. "Alpha are very black-and-white," she said. "I find them very rigid in their view of what it is to be a woman."

If her church had £1 million to spend, she said, "we would use it to set up day centres and support the Jubilee 2000 campaign to get rid of Third World debt".

Vicar is jailed for cheating parishioners in £50,000 fraud

By Helen Johnstone

A VICAR who defrauded parishioners and the Church of England out of an estimated £50,000 by overcharging for weddings, baptisms and funerals was yesterday jailed for nine months.

Roy Hibbert, 68, who retired last year, spent the money on foreign holidays and a retirement home. He was caught after members of his congregation complained that they were being overcharged for services and his superiors called in the police.

Hibbert, who has three children and struggled to live on his stipend, began falsifying accounts in 1986 when he was Rural Dean and Prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral and took over three parish churches in Newport, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told on Monday.

As well as overcharging for services, Hibbert, former rector at St Nicholas Church in Newport, Shropshire, also pocketed extra cash from bellingring. He insisted on payment in cash or cheques made out in his name. He called the extra fees vicar's extras, and because he under-declared his earnings he was awarded extra income from Church funds.

Hibbert added unofficial surcharges to the tariff for weddings and funerals, sometimes doubling the official sum. He carried out the same scam with bellingring charges. He also submitted bills for paying a caretaker and verger at one church where neither position existed.

One bride complained that she had been charged £118 for a marriage service in 1988 which police said should have been £42.

Seven years later she was charged £322 for a blessing, after a second marriage in a register office. Bells and a choir were extra. In one instance a young couple offered a cheque but Hibbert walked them to a bank machine to be paid in cash. Hibbert, who admitted 11 charges of false accounting, was sentenced yesterday.

After the case the Diocese of Lichfield said in a statement that Hibbert no longer had a licence to preach, and that new accountability procedures had been introduced to ensure that nothing similar happened



Hibbert: he overcharged for conducting weddings

again. The statement added: "The diocese places the utmost importance on financial integrity and regularity. Roy Hibbert has betrayed that trust over a number of years. Fortunately an incident such as this is extremely rare."

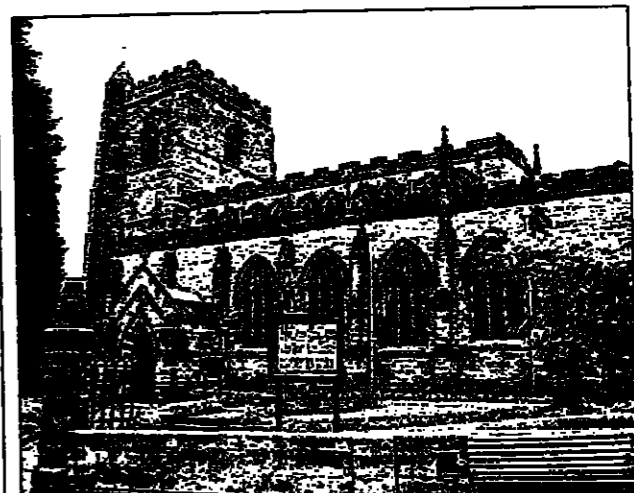
Judge Frank Chapman said Hibbert had struggled to survive on his stipend and the burden of hearing and maintaining a large rectory had affected his health and that of his wife. He added: "I suspect you fell into this trap as a means of trying to make life more comfortable for yourself and especially your wife."

"But having said that your income was greater than that of your parishioners and at least equal to that of a young teacher or nurse. You gave 42 years of excellent service, working unselfishly for the Church, parish and community, putting their needs in front of you and your family."

"Your character is not wholly blackened, it is stained. Even an ordained priest can fall into temptation."

The Bishop of Lichfield, The Right Rev Keith Sutton, said after the case: "It is tragic that a priest who has been highly regarded in the parishes he has served should have his public ministry end in such a regrettable manner."

Hibbert had been at Newport for 16 years, having moved from Harlescott in Shropshire. Between 1955 and 1958 he was curate at St Francis, West Bromwich, before moving to Candock, Stoke-on-Trent, and then Harlescott in 1967. He was made a prebendary in 1980.



St Nicholas Church, Newport, where Hibbert was rector

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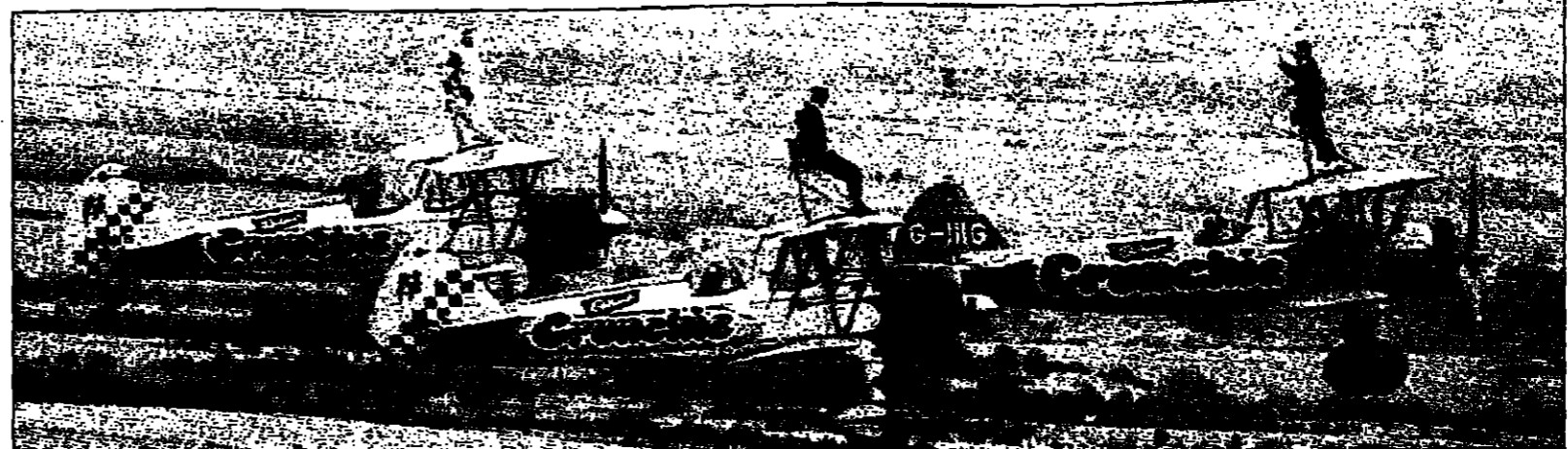
Scotland suffers as suicide rate continues to rise

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

PEOPLE living in Scotland are more likely to take their own lives than those in other parts of Britain, according to figures published yesterday. The survey from the Office for National Statistics found that the North West of England suffered the highest incidence of all English regions. Although suicide rates across the United Kingdom generally fell between 1982 and 1996, they rose among men aged 15 to 44. The rate declined 4 per cent among all men and 40 per cent among all women, but rose 24 per cent among men aged 15 to 44.

Julia Bunting, co-author of the report, said the most striking finding was that suicide rates in Scotland were considerably higher than in the rest of the country and that these differences had increased over time. "Areas with high deprivation... did tend to be areas with high suicide rates," she said. The survey concluded that "suicide rates in young men and women living in deprived areas (of Scotland) were about twice the rates of those living in affluent areas". For men aged 15 to 44 and 45 and over, the rate in Scotland in 1982-84 was more than 25 per cent higher than that for the United Kingdom as a whole, but by 1994-96 it was over 50 per cent higher. For women aged 15 to 44 the suicide rate in Scotland in 1982-84 was 35 per cent higher than that for the UK as a whole, but by 1994-96 it was 70 per cent higher.

Wales also showed a significant variation from the UK norm: the suicide rate for men aged 15 to 44 was 25 per cent higher than in the UK as a whole, but the rate for women was 21 per cent lower. Lisa Colyer, of the Samaritans, said that there was a clear link between poverty and suicide rates. "A poor socioeconomic background is likely to make you feel you have fewer options. People may start off being depressed because they fear the bailiffs will come round after they have failed to pay off a £300 loan to buy a stove and end up feeling there is no way out," she said.



Heavens above: the Rev Anthony Kelton agreed to take to the top of a biplane to bless the marriage of Dave Lawrence to Jane Harland

Alternative venues tempt couples to tie the knot

By ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

MORE people are opting for civil rather than religious marriage, as couples take advantage of the new freedom to marry in venues such as hotels and castles. Figures published yesterday by the Office for National Statistics show that the proportion of civil to religious marriages, which has stood at roughly 50/50 for more than two decades, has shifted to about 60/40 after the introduction in 1995 of legislation allowing people to marry in non-religious premises other than register offices. John Haskey, author of the report in the latest edition of *Population Trends*, said that the findings represented "an historically momentous change" second only to the advent of civil marriage in England and Wales in 1837. Mr Haskey also suggested that the introduction of alternative marriage venues may even have resulted in an increase in the total number of weddings, persuading

people to marry who would not otherwise have done so. Those most likely to marry in approved premises were older couples who had previously been living together, and where one of the two had been divorced. There were nearly 18,000 marriages in "approved premises" between April 1995 and December 1996, by which time they constituted 7 per cent of all weddings. Civil marriages as a whole, including those in register offices, formed 52 per cent of all marriages in 1994, but had risen to 59 per cent by 1996. Mr Haskey noted that number of register office marriages had risen; the 1995 legislation also allowed people to get married in any register office, not just the one in the area where they live. Two thirds of the premises approved for marriages are hotels, inns, pubs and restaurants. One in eight is a stately home or place of historic interest and one in 16 is a sports

or leisure centre. Premises include a battleship in Portsmouth, London Zoo and Old Trafford football ground. The law states that the marriages have to be conducted by a superintendent registrar and the premises must be "seemly and dignified". Mr Haskey estimates that more than four in ten of all marriages approved in premises would otherwise have taken place in a religious venue. Of these, 26 per cent would have been Anglican marriages, 9 per cent Non-conformist denominations, 5 per cent Roman Catholic and the remaining 2 per cent with other religions. Six in ten would otherwise have been register office ceremonies. Tom Horwood, a spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church, pointed out that "a lot of those weddings [in approved premises] include people getting married for a second time, who would not be able to marry in a Catholic church anyway".



Martin and Sally Phillips married at Powderham Castle

Backward Britain marked down by UN

By HELEN RUMBELOW

BRITAIN is one of the most illiterate, poverty-stricken and overworked of all industrialised countries, according to a United Nations report today. Despite moving up a place to become the 14th most advanced country in the world in terms of wealth, education and longevity, Britain is presented as one of the most divided Western societies. More than one in six British people is said to live in poverty, the third-highest proportion among 17 industrialised nations, after Ireland and the

United States. The Netherlands, with similar average earnings to Britain, has one in 50 living in poverty. This new index in the UN's annual Human Development Report differs by including scales of literacy as well as numbers living below the poverty line. Britain is undone on both counts. More than one in five British adults is "functionally illiterate", unable to cope with written instructions such as knowing how many painkillers to take from details on the packet. This is three times as many as in Sweden, which has the least poverty, and surpassed

only by Ireland. Among high-earning countries, the United States and Britain have the highest numbers living below the poverty line - 19 per cent in the USA and 13 per cent in Britain. Other figures in the report add to a bleak image. Of the top 20 most advanced countries, Britain has the highest number of young prisoners, the lowest number of doctors per head, a soaring teenage pregnancy rate beaten only by the United States, and the longest working week at 43 hours. The report notes that the three richest individuals in the world are

richer than 48 countries added together. The richest fifth of the world consumes 16 times as much as the poorest. However, Richard Jolly, the author, said: "Abundance of consumption is no crime. It is the lifeblood of human advance." The West should concentrate on changing patterns of consumption, he said, to make them more environmentally friendly. Britain does have long life, helped by a lower-than-average suicide rate. The male rate, at 19 per 100,000 people, is under half that of the otherwise high-ranking Finland.

THE NUMBERS AT RISK					
The tables show suicide rates per million population. The rates are ranked according to a confidence interval indicator to take account of their statistical variability. The variability is based on the actual number of suicides.					
HIGH SUICIDE RATES					
Men aged 15-44	Rate*	Number	Women aged 15-44	Rate*	Number
Manchester	337	208	Manchester	113	65
Hastings	406	40	Southampton	96	28
Copeland	368	37	Westminster, City of	93	28
Cambridgeshire	328	63	Blackpool	105	19
North West	328	55	Bolton	88	29
Derbyshire	356	36	Lambeth	84	36
Barrow-in-Furness	359	34	Haringey	86	28
Cheshire	322	74	Barnley	117	19
Penile	342	38			
Tameside	288	86			
LOW SUICIDE RATES					
Men aged 15-44	Rate*	Number	Women aged 15-44	Rate*	Number
Sth Herefordshire	69	4	Stafford-on-Avon	8	1
Torbay/Walling	84	13	Hart	9	1
Mid Bedfordshire	99	16	Sudbury	9	1
Purbeck	75	4	Womanshore	9	1
Wokingham	106	21	Thurrock	12	2
Bromley	123	47	Castle Point	10	1
Sth Glos.	122	39	Great Yarmouth	10	1
Fenland	100	10	Babergh	10	1
Harborne	104	12	Tewkesbury	11	1
Bexley	122	34	Forest Heath	11	1
HIGH SUICIDE RATES					
Women over 45	Rate*	Number	Rate*	Number	
Camden	201	43	Conwy	157	22
Westminster, City of	175	44	Carrick	155	23
Brighton & Hove	150	45	Manchester	139	46
Cambridge	154	18	Rushmore	150	21
Kensington & Chelsea	148	26	Scarborough	136	20

* Age-standardised suicide rates per million population by local authority, England and Wales, 1991-96.
Source: Office for National Statistics

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Amnesia man begs for clues to his past

By SIMON DE BRUKELLES

THEY are calling him Richard Unknown. The well-spoken, silver-haired stranger has no recollection of his past life and carried no clues to his identity when he dialled 999 from a railway station in Dorset last Friday.

He had no money, no ticket, no watch and no coat when he became aware that he was standing in the rain on the edge of a wood on the outskirts of Poole. His only possessions, apart from the shirt and trousers he stood in, are a gold tooth and an expensive dental plate.

The mystery man is now appealing for anyone who knows his identity, or how he got there, to come forward in the hope that a familiar face might jog his memory.

Since his admission to Poole Hospital, the stranger has sat lonely and increasingly frustrated waiting for his memory to return. Doctors say that he is suffering from global amnesia, a condition that causes total memory loss.

Although he can write and can recall the name of the Queen, he says he has no recollection at all of his own

life. The man, in his late 50s or early 60s, said: "I have had no flashbacks or dreams of my past life. I don't know my name, my age, or what I did for a living."

"Physically I am fine, but I feel vulnerable and extremely sad and lonely. I don't know what I like or what my tastes are in books, music or newspapers. I don't even know if I have a driving licence."

"There are several imperfections, apart from the shirt and trousers he stood in, are a gold tooth and an expensive dental plate."

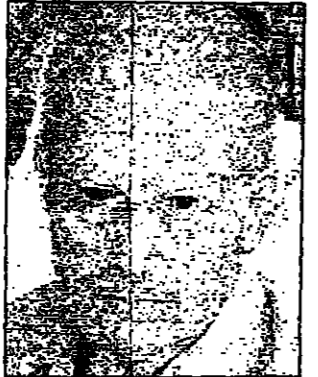
All he can remember are the events leading up to his call from the telephone box at Branksome station. "It has been suggested to me that this is nature's way of protecting me against a traumatic experience," he said.

He is well-built, 5ft 10in and has blue eyes. He has a white mark on the little finger of his right hand, indicating he may have worn a ring.

Brian Wharton, a consultant psychiatrist at St Andrew's Hospital in Northampton, said: "Global amnesia is usually short-lived. It is most often of psychological origin and a temporary denial of a recent event."

"The sufferer is unaware of his background and, in nearly all cases, the amnesia provides an escape from a severely distressing recent event involving themselves or a person close to them. Recovery is normally within a few days, depending on the patient."

Dorset Police have asked anyone who recognises the man to contact the Arne Ward at Poole Hospital on 01302-448330.



Mystery man: "I feel so vulnerable and lonely"

Poets gather to mark Lakeland bicentenary

THREE of the country's leading poets were in the Lake District yesterday to help the Wordsworth Trust to celebrate the bicentenary of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which Wordsworth wrote with Coleridge.

First published in 1798, the *Lyrical Ballads* marked a transformation in British literature by exploring for the first time the joy and suffering of ordinary people. Last night

Seamus Heaney, winner of the Nobel prize for literature; Douglas Dunn, one of Scotland's foremost writers; and Andrew Motion, poet and biographer, read a selection of their work at the Low Wood Hotel, near Ambleside.

The readings launched the bicentenary event, which continues today with a keynote address from Heaney.

Leading article, page 19

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Tim Clague, whose ten-minute film, *NThat*, will be directed by Stephen Daldry

Unknown's first script hailed by leading director

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

AN UNKNOWN 25-year-old writer will have his prize-winning script brought to the screen by one of Britain's leading theatre directors.

The short screenplay by Tim Clague, a video technician at Bournemouth and Poole College, so impressed Stephen Daldry, a former artistic director of the Royal Court, that he has agreed to direct it.

Clague won Daldry's services — and a £100,000 budget for the film — when his script, *NThat*, won the Jerwood Foundation's inaugural film prize yesterday.

Clague, who grew up in Wiltshire, had entered the script at the last minute, thinking it was his too short to meet the competition's ten-minute criterion. So he was surprised to learn that he had beaten 3,000 other entrants in a contest judged by a team that included the Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson and the producers Eric

Fellner and Tim Bevan of Working Title, whose films include *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. He has since lengthened the script.

Daldry, whose theatre productions have included *An Inspector Calls* and who has spent the past year writing a screenplay for Working Title that he will eventually direct, described *NThat* as "totally self-contained" and "very moving". He said: "For a first-time screenwriter it's remarkably film-literate. He is evidently a talent."

The story centres on an eight-year-old working-class Liverpoolian boy and his view of his family history and the world around him. Shooting will start on October 5, and casting directors are scouring Liverpool for a child to play the lead.

Clague had initially planned a career in business and computing, but instead took a media course at Bournemouth University.

Jobless get chance to show off art talents

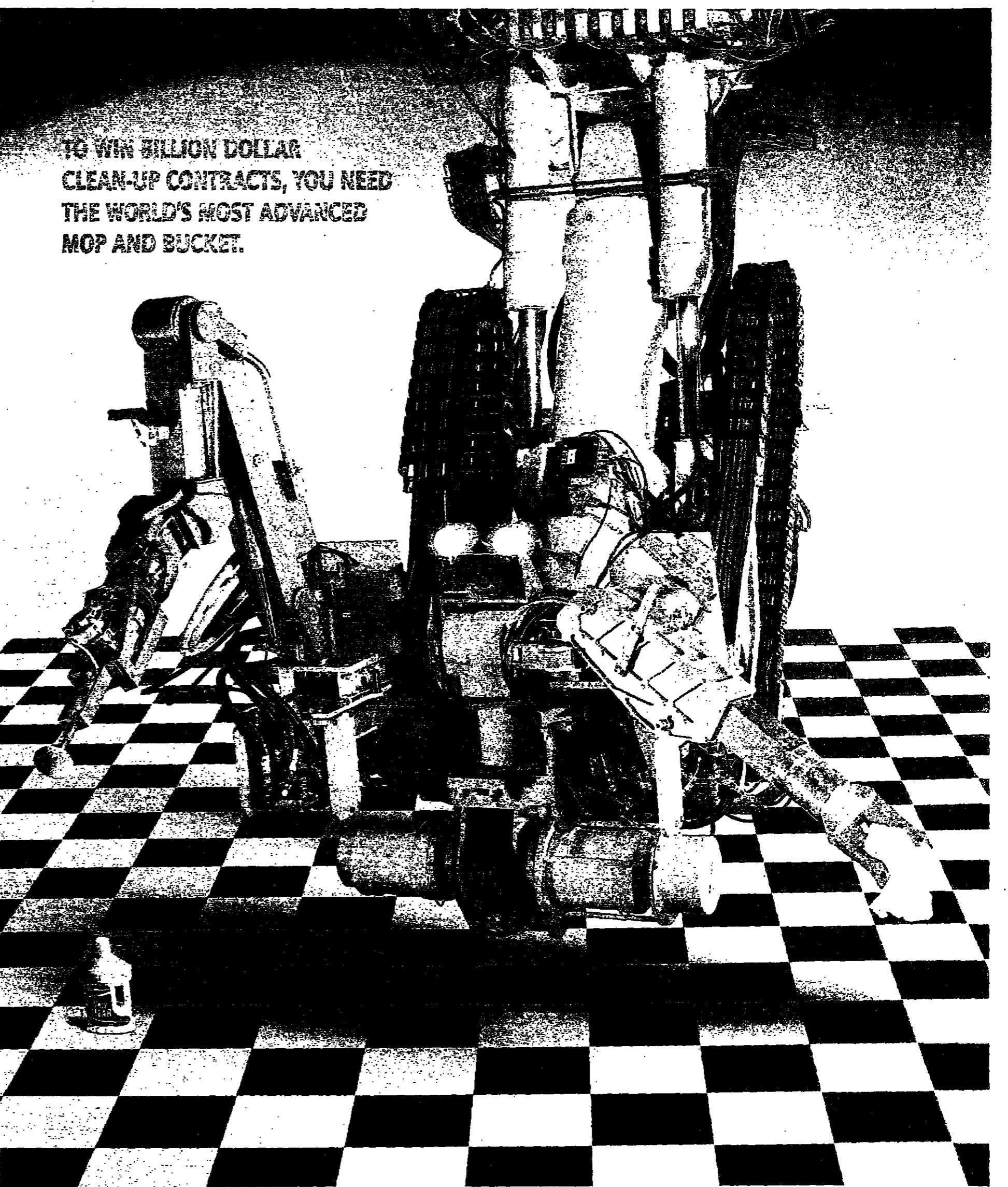
By MARK HENDERSON

THE Commonwealth Institute is to offer unemployed Londoners a stage to show off their creative talents as part of an ambitious plan to get thousands of young people into the arts and media for the millennium.

The institute announced a £5 million partnership yesterday with the charity TS²k (Trafalgar Square 2000) which will see its headquarters in Kensington transformed into a youth cultural centre.

Under the Creative Commonwealth programme, its 6,500 square metres of gallery space, 400-seat theatre, exhibition hall and grounds will be thrown open to London's youth so musicians, actors, dancers and designers can develop their art. There will be regular "showcase" events at which they can impress creative industry professionals looking for new talent.

The institute will be the centrepiece of the TS²k initiative, which hopes to reach 12,000 Londoners by the end of 2000 and find jobs for a third of them.



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Yeltsin dithers over picking a leader who could depose him

Richard Beeston reports on the Catch-22 facing the President

PRESIDENT YELTSIN was paralysed by indecision yesterday as he searched desperately for a prime ministerial candidate capable of saving Russia from economic collapse, but who is also willing to keep the ailing Kremlin leader in power.

Clasped at his country retreat outside Moscow, Mr Yeltsin, who has not made any public remarks since his embarrassing press conference with President Clinton last week, dithered as the rouble continued to tumble and the country remained rudderless.

Kremlin officials insisted that Viktor Chernomyrdin, the acting Prime Minister whose nomination has been twice rejected by the Duma, the lower house of parliament, was still in the running for a third and final try next week.

But behind the scenes, Mr Chernomyrdin's political career seemed all but finished. Although Mr Yeltsin had prepared a letter putting forward his candidate for a third vote the document was recalled after Mr Chernomyrdin's disastrous performance in the Duma on Monday.

Yesterday the candidate leading the pack was Yuri Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow, who is credited with transforming the Russian capital during his tenure. Despite his insistence that he would not be named for the job and was content to be running the capital, he is nonetheless feared by the Yeltsin clan for his power and ill-disguised ambition to rule Russia one day.

Yevgeni Primakov, the acting Foreign Minister, was put forward on Monday as the perfect compromise candidate. The former intelligence chief has credibility abroad and at home, even among the Communists and nationalists. However, yesterday he declared "unambiguously" that he did not want the job.

That left Mr Yeltsin facing a Catch-22 situation. If he appoints Mr Luzhkov, Russia may have an able new leader, but Mr Yeltsin would almost certainly be eased from his throne. However, if he chooses someone without credibility or experience the current crisis could deepen and the country could face civil unrest.

If that happened a military strongman, possibly General Aleksandr Lebed, the Govern-



Nuclear scientists seeking wage rises and payment of arrears carry banners warning of a threat to national security outside the Ministry of Atomic Energy in Moscow yesterday. Fears grew over nuclear stability after workers at two nuclear research complexes, in the Urals and Sarova, 300 miles southeast of Moscow, went on strike, demanding five months of unpaid wages (Robin Lodge writes)

nor of Krasnoyarsk, a region in Siberia rich in natural resources, could seize the initiative and take control of the country.

One option Mr Yeltsin would like to avoid is having his candidate rejected by the Duma at a third and final vote. Under Russia's Constitution he would be compelled to dissolve parliament and hold fresh elections.

Although this would enable him to rule by decree, he would be running a country with no legitimate government, no parliament and an increasingly restless population which would hold him personally responsible for the country's fate during the harsh winter ahead.

Also, parliament has made it clear it will not go quietly. To counter the threat of dissolution, the Duma is already preparing impeachment proceedings against President Yeltsin, which if endorsed by

300 deputies would make it impossible for the chamber to be dissolved.

If that happened, there is the real threat of a repeat of the events of October 1993 when parliament became a magnet for anti-Yeltsin opposition, which he crushed with tanks. This time the military would not back him and could even turn their guns against him.

‘Civil war is the most terrible thing that the current political crisis could bring Russia’

Patriarch Aleksii II, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, yesterday led prayers in front of an icon of the Virgin Mary to ward off the threat of civil strife.

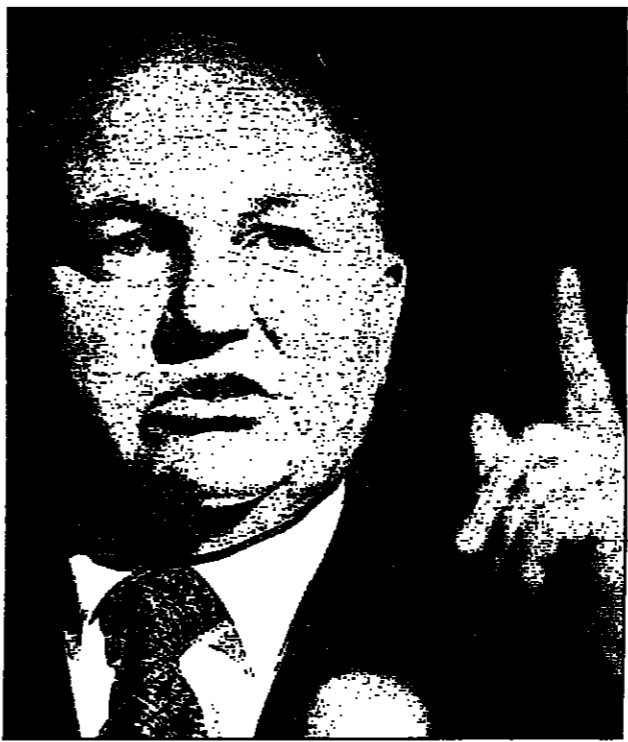
“Civil war is the most terrible thing that the current political crisis could bring Russia, because blood always divides,” he said. “We know that many are having a hard

time now, and it will perhaps become even more difficult. Nevertheless, we believe that the Lord will protect our land from misfortunes, sorrows and internecine war.”

□ Rome: President Scalfaro has postponed a state visit to Russia set for Sunday, when President Yeltsin may be facing a final showdown with the Duma over his choice of Prime Minister. The visit had been seen as a show of support for the Russian Government as it struggles with its political and economic crises.

The Dalai Lama, who was due to visit Russia from September 19, has also put off his trip because of the turmoil. He has apologized to Russia's Buddhists.

He was due to visit the republics of Buryatia, Tuva and Kalmykia, where many of the country's Buddhists live, as well as Moscow and St Petersburg. (AP)



Yuri Luzhkov, Mayor of Moscow, is a prime candidate for leadership but is too ambitious for Mr Yeltsin's liking

Show goes on for UK firms at untimely trade fair

FROM ALICE LAGNADO IN ST PETERSBURG

IN A display of true stiff upper lip, Britain opened a trade fair in St Petersburg yesterday despite the free-falling Russian rouble and a bomb scare.

The fair, Britain - Window for Business, was opened by Brian Wilson, Minister for Trade, and featured 139 British companies.

But the event was jinxed before it was officially open. At midday, organisers received a bomb threat and everyone was evacuated for an hour. Police later revealed the phone call was a prank.

A steady trickle of business people and the general public passed through the doors, with an ice-cream stand attracting greater interest than the more expensive British cars or chocolate.

Perhaps the most useful item on display was an automatic banknote counter designed by Manchester-based BMD International Ltd. The counter features an inbuilt dust collector and counterfeit detector.

“I think there could be a good market for these,” said Robert Walker, a sales executive for the company. “If more roubles go into circulation, you need to count the notes faster.”

Viktor Chernomyrdin, yet to be confirmed by the State Duma as Prime Minister, proposes printing a limited amount of roubles to pull Russia out of the crisis. Critics say it would be extremely difficult to limit the number of roubles printed.

Opening the fair, Mr Wilson said: “Out of adversity very often can come opportunity. Trade goes on whatever the political and economic circumstances and business is being done in that hall.”

Vladimir Yakovlev, the Governor of St Petersburg, was equally resolute. “In this century, Russia has survived many crises - the civil war, the Great Patriotic War, the break-up of the Soviet Union - and it has always recovered. Crises come and crises go,” he said.

Despite store shelves continuing to empty, British company executives said they were confident investment in Russia was still a safe bet.

“You have got to think long-term, or it will be the Russian Revolution all over again. Too much has been invested in this country by the G7 group,” Mr Walker said.

Mike Wilson, general director of Unwins Seeds, said his company might profit from the crisis. “We see the present situation as an opportunity. I think there will be a demand for vegetable seeds in particular. We have been trading in Russia for five years.”

Regions take control to maintain supplies

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

FACED with a power vacuum in Moscow, Russian regional leaders took matters into their own hands yesterday, imposing drastic measures to maintain local supplies of food and other essentials. One provincial governor declared a state of emergency.

President Yeltsin remained closeted with advisers in his country residence just west of Moscow, working out his response to the Duma's second rejection of Viktor Chernomyrdin as Prime Minister. Mr Yeltsin has to decide whether to resubmit Mr Chernomyrdin for a crucial third vote or find another candidate. A spokesman said yesterday that no decision was expected by the end of the day.

Leonid Gorbenko, Governor of Kaliningrad province, the Baltic enclave cut off from Russia, sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania, announced a state of emergency yesterday, assuming “entire responsibility” for political and economic decisions.

A spokesman for Mr Gorbenko said his aim was to maintain fuel supplies, for



Old women trying to sell surplus apples from their gardens in Tula, 100 miles south of Moscow

which Kaliningrad was entirely reliant on imports. He said the price of petrol had gone up by 300 per cent in the last three weeks, while coal had doubled in price. Efforts were underway to secure supplies of Russian fuel across Lithuania, but so far without success.

There were no restrictions on people's rights and liberties and no price freezes, although appeals had been issued for public order and against hoarding, he said.

Aleksandr Lebed, the former paratrooper general who was elected Governor of the Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk earlier this year, has ordered price freezes on staple foods, medicines, public transport, fuel and electricity.

The *Sogodnya* newspaper quoted Mr Lebed as saying he was aware that such a move overstepped the law, but that he was acting “to prevent hunger and social upheavals on the threshold of winter”.

Several other regional governors were reported to be considering similar measures.

In Moscow, which has traditionally been far better supplied than any other city, shops were packed with customers trying to convert their

roubles into goods. Supplies of salt, sugar and vegetable oil were running out. Even domestically produced foods were scarce as wholesalers halted supplies while waiting for the rouble to stabilise.

News papers issued warnings of imminent civil unrest. Aleksandr Zheleznin, writing in the daily *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, reported that the three-month-old tented picket by striking miners outside the government White House in Moscow had been reinforced by other workers. “Their aim is actually to stage a revolution,” he wrote.

Yesterday's edition of the weekly current affairs journal *Izvestia* carried photographs from October 1993 showing the burnt-out parliament building, troops crouching behind armoured vehicles and bodies lying in pools of blood, with the headline: “All Over Again!”

Serbs round up 600 ‘terror’ suspects in Kosovo sweep

FROM AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE IN PRISTINA

HUNDREDS of ethnic Albanians have been detained on charges of terrorism after a crackdown by Serbian government troops on rebels in the province of Kosovo.

The Belgrade pro-government daily *Politika* reported yesterday that more than 600 ethnic Albanians had been arrested in the past four days in Kosovo. It said that the men, suspected of being members of the insurgent Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), were arrested in southern, south-western and western Kosovo regions. Charges of terrorism would be brought against those involved in attacks on

the Serb police and civilians, while those who were “forcibly mobilised by the KLA” would be released, it added.

According to the paper, the investigation includes tests for traces of gunpowder on their hands to prove they had used weapons. Serb investigators have seized KLA archives.

Albanian sources accused Belgrade's troops of separating men of fighting age from their families.

During a visit to Kosovo, John Shatuck, US Assistant Secretary of State for human rights, said he gathered “eyewitness accounts of security forces separating men and

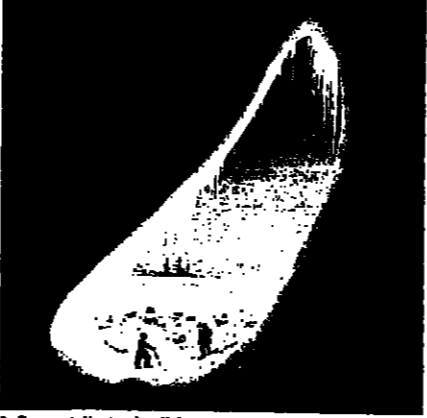
boys from their families”. Mr Shatuck said the International Committee of the Red Cross had not yet been given access to the detainees.

The Kosovo Albanian Committee for Human Rights said 828 ethnic Albanians - including 126 women and 86 children - have been killed in the province. The centre gave names, cause and place of death for most victims.

□ Geneva: United Nations agencies appealed yesterday for \$54 million (£33 million) to help refugees fleeing Kosovo. The UN refugee agency said 400,000 people were expected to need help in the winter. (AP)

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Congo peace in shreds even as ink dries



President Kabila shows the strain at a press conference after a two-day peace summit, which ended yesterday, failed to find a resolution to the conflict in the Congo where rebels are waging war to topple him from power

With the rebels kept out of the talks, there was little hope of a truce. The war resumed even before the leaders left Victoria Falls, reports Jan Raath

A PEACE summit of the factions in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo closed in acrimony yesterday, offering little hope of a quick end to the fighting.

An agreement on paper, without a date for implementation, for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign troops was announced after two days of talks between the Congo's President Kabila and his allies, the leaders of Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia on the one side, and on the other the Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda, who support the rebel Tutsi coalition fighting to oust Mr Kabila.

Even before the toothless agreement was announced, the rebels denounced it. "Because we have been excluded, we are not bound by it," Bizima Karaha, the rebel leader, declared. "They will only know we exist when we start shooting."

Joseph Bideri, spokesman for President Bizimungu of Rwanda, said: "You cannot talk about a ceasefire without talking with the chief warring parties. It's going to be difficult to come to any meaningful ceasefire."

The end of the meeting also marked the expiry of a temporary ceasefire agreed last week at the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in South Africa when Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, urged the states involved to reach a peaceful solution. But even before the grim-faced leaders left their five-star accommodation overlooking the Zambezi River, Congolese military officials

were reporting that jets of forces backing Mr Kabila had bombed the rebel-held town of Kalemie in the east.

President Chiluba of Zambia, the chairman of the peace summit, said the defence ministers of all the countries here would meet at the headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity in Addis Ababa tomorrow to draft a plan for the implementation of a ceasefire, and a way of monitoring the withdrawal of all foreign forces.

But before the plan can be put into effect it has to be agreed by all seven Governments. Moreover there has to be agreement as to who is

involved in the fighting. Zimbabwe, which along with Angola and Namibia deployed a sizeable military force in the western Congo last month, claims that Ugandans and Rwandans have been leading the rebel campaign. The two East African countries have challenged them to produce evidence of any involvement.

"This accusing and denying has been going on for a month now, and it can go on indefinitely, and so will the arguing about anything gets done about the ceasefire," a Western diplomat here said.

The sanguine Mr Chiluba appealed for patience. "The war has not abated. People are dying in Congo and we must stop these hostilities," he said. "Our political will is that there must be a cessation of violence now, even as I speak. But you and I know that ceasefire agreements cannot be easily implemented."

The rebels' refusal to recognise the agreement is almost certain to scuttle it. But then their disillusionment with the peace negotiations was hardly a surprise. After President Mugabe of Zimbabwe said they were "welcome" to attend the summit, his officials made every effort to be nasty towards them. They were kept waiting at the airport for 90 minutes on arrival on Monday. Then they were refused admission into the conference, and restricted to their hotel rooms while heavily armed Zimbabwean police kept the press at bay.

"They are not heads of state, they are a rebel group," Mr Chiluba declared.

The rebel team had planned to hold a press conference before they left Victoria Falls, but were hurried out of a side exit by Zimbabwean secret police. Mr Karaha was able to only utter a sentence. He said: "This talk of a ceasefire is being done behind our back."

In contrast to the fleet of limousines provided for the Presidents, Mr Karaha was bundled into the back seat of a government Land Rover, squeezed in with two other rebel officials clutching their briefcases on their laps. Looking like illegal immigrants, they were driven to the airport before the peace summit was formally concluded.



Rebel leaders Bizima Karaha, right, and Arthur Ngoma were treated shabbily after being invited

Nigerian prisoners released

By MICHAEL DYNES

TWENTY Ogoni activists who have languished in jail for four years without trial have been released unconditionally from Nigeria's infamous Port Harcourt prison. It was confirmed yesterday.

All are receiving urgent medical attention for a variety of conditions, including blindness, tuberculosis, paralysis, and heart disease, after prolonged detention in a tiny, vermin-infested cell.

The prisoners had been accused by the Nigerian military authorities of complicity in the murders of four tribal chiefs who were bludgeoned to death by an irate mob after bitter internal rivalries between moderates and hardliners within the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Mosp).

Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni minority rights activist, and eight others were executed for the murders in 1995 by Sani Abacha, the former Nigerian dictator, sparking an international storm of protest.

The executions provoked Nigeria's immediate suspension from the Commonwealth.

North Korea missiles 'can hit US bases in Pacific'

By DAVID WATTS, ASIA EDITOR

NORTH Korea's new long-range missile capability threatens important American bases in the Pacific, according to the South Korean Government.

Both Guam, a key long-range bomber base for the United States Air Force, and Okinawa, which is America's most important base in the area, are within range of Pyongyang's Taepo Dong 1 missile which was recently test-fired.

The new estimate of the North Korean threat was made yesterday by Kang In Duk, Seoul's Minister of Unification.

North Korea maintains that the missile was not a strategic weapon but was used to put a satellite in orbit, a version of events supported by Moscow.

Either way, Pyongyang has clearly moved into a new area of regional military importance. This was quickly reflected by an American decision to move six heavy bombers to Andersen air force base on Guam. These were made up of three B52s and three B2s, the new barwing Stealth bomber,

which is rarely seen outside the continental United States. Washington denies any connection between the missile launch and the aircraft deployment.

The North Korean move is being taken all the more seriously in Japan because of the recent concentration of power in the hands of Kim Jong Il, son of the late dictator Kim Il Sung, who has assumed supreme power after a four-year hiatus since the

death of his father in July, 1994. Japan maintains that the missile, launched on August 31, passed over its territory without warning.

Hirofumi Nonaka, the Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary, said: "I am worried military power will take a greater position in North Korea."

The North Korean Supreme People's Assembly has abolished the position of President and, in again placing Mr Kim at the head of the National Defence Commission, it increased the importance of the military after a long period in which it was believed that commanders were suspicious of a dissolute leader who did not have his father's guerrilla war record.

This was part of a streamlining of government bodies in the most far-reaching shake-up of the power structure since 1972. The changes include a Western-style Cabinet staffed by younger technocrats.

As head of the Defence Commission, Mr Kim has the power to declare war. Military commands are channelled through the commission.

RIOT police in Cambodia, wielding electric shock batons, have broken up an opposition protest entering its third week in a park outside Parliament House in Phnom Penh. The peaceful protest aimed to highlight allegations of fraud in the July general election.

Several hundred police who arrived in lorries quickly dispersed the protesters. Water hoses were used against the crowds, who had been sitting around the clock sit-down. Others were brutally struck with batons.

The crowds tried to regroup in side-streets, pelting the police with stones and lighting petrol to keep them back. In retaliation, police fired warning shots over the heads of demonstrators. There were no reported casualties.

In another area of the city, riot police moved against students who had been staging their own election protests outside the Ministry of Information. They were calling for the media — largely controlled by the Cambodian People's Party of the Second Prime Minister, Hun Sen,

which won the July general election — to broadcast news of the opposition demonstrations. The protest had attracted about 15,000 people.

Opposition MPs hailed the emergence of a new movement in Cambodia — People's Power — saying that, for the first time, the momentum had come from the public.

Sam Rainsy, the opposition politician who spearheaded the demonstration, put himself under United Nations protection yesterday, fearing for his life after a municipal court issued a warrant for his arrest.

"You must expect anything to happen," he told Australia's SBS Television. "We have reached the degree of violence where no one can be certain to be spared."

The events do little to help resolve Cambodia's continuing political stalemate. Although declared the election victor, Mr Hun Sen lacks the parliamentary majority needed to govern alone. The opposition parties have refused to discuss forming a coalition and say they will boycott the new parliament.

Cambodian police break up protest

FROM CAROLINE GLUCK IN PHNOM PENH

WORLD IN BRIEF

68 die when Brazil buses hit fuel trucks

Rio de Janeiro: At least 68 people were killed early yesterday when two buses transporting Roman Catholic pilgrims collided with two fuel-carrying trucks on a busy main road in the interior of São Paulo (Gabriella Gamini writes). Drivers who stopped at the scene pulled charred remains from the incinerated debris. According to witnesses, the two buses appeared to be racing each other when they crashed into the fuel trucks ahead. Last year more than 40,000 people died in fatal crashes across Brazil. It has the highest number of road accidents in South America.

Girl admits poison post

Tokyo: A girl aged 15 admitted posting poisoned "slimming potion" to 26 classmates and a teacher as a practical joke. Japanese police reported. In a separate incident, 14 children were taken to hospital when they fell ill after drinking canned tea bought at a convenience store in the latest of a wave of poison scares that has killed five people and injured more than 60 since July. One maker of canned tea said sales have slumped by up to 30 per cent. (AFP)

Shark 'ate missing divers'

Sydney: Two American divers left on Australia's Great Barrier Reef by a dive charter boat in January were probably eaten by a tiger shark, an inquest into their disappearance heard. "My feeling is they were taken by a tiger shark" in the first 24 to 48 hours," Ben Cropp, a shark expert, told the inquest into the disappearance of Thomas and Eileen Lonergan from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. (Reuters)

Anwar spurns morals claim

Kuala Lumpur: Anwar Ibrahim, right, the sacked Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, has rejected the claim by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister, that moral reasons were behind his loss of office, and said the "law of the jungle" was at work. "The reason given for my expulsion, because of my low morals, is unacceptable because there have been no formal charges against me," he said here. (AFP)

Maidens' prayers answered

Nairobi: Twenty men attending a prayer service at a mosque in northern Kenya returned home with a bride each and money for a honeymoon, it was reported. The imam at a mosque in Garissa asked the congregation if there were any unmarried men present as he had 20 young women all seeking a husband. He married them on the spot. (Reuters)

Delhi orders inquiry as tainted cooking oil kills dozens

FROM CHRISTOPHER THOMAS IN DELHI

DOZENS of Delhiwallahs have died after eating food cooked in contaminated mustard oil — further proof of the hazards of eating in India. Drinking is also risky, be it water or whisky: both are killers. Breathing, too, is dangerous.

Everybody has a favourite horror story, such as drinking fake milk made from a white, powdery substance that is in reality urea — adding some unidentified substance properly used as agricultural fertiliser. It is well established that roadside

cafés add old engine oil to their cooking oil as an economy measure. The fruit and vegetables piled so alluringly in the bazaars of every city conceal a deadly excess of DDT and other pesticides, which have been sprayed in excessive amounts by illiterate farmers unable to read the instruction labels.

The death toll from contaminated mustard oil has risen every day for more than a week. The owners of the firm that produces it have been arrested on suspicion of deliberately adding some unidentified substance to make it cheaper to manufacture.

Scores of victims have been admitted to hospital with dropsy in the past week, and the Government has banned sales of mustard oil in Delhi and 14 states while it investigates what happened. The capital's health minister demanded the death penalty for the guilty.

The deaths have drawn attention to the lethal tactics used by food producers to keep costs down and their products looking fresh. "There is poison in our food," Outlook magazine proclaimed. "All we can do is grin and gulp it." The Indian Express raged in an editorial that the

wiful, cold-blooded addition of toxic substances to cooking oil reflected "how total is the moral degeneration of the times".

Indian women have the world's highest content of DDT in breast milk; the buffalo milk used by most Indians is invariably contaminated because the animals are given copper sulphate to clot their blood before slaughter, thus preventing weight-loss in butchered meat.

Studies have found that most vegetables sold in the markets contain unacceptable levels of copper, lead and cadmium. That might

partly explain why such vast numbers of Indian children have learning difficulties and low IQs.

Whisky and other alcoholic drinks offer no escape from danger: they have been known to kill people because of their impurity, and all Indian beer offers the certainty of the mother of hangovers from even modest consumption because it contains glycerine, a preservative. Experience teaches drinkers to remove it by plunging the bottle neck-down into a bowl of water so that the glycerine — heavier than water — trickles out in a yellow, slimy trail.



Kang warned of new Pyongyang threat

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Home run hero gives America back its sense of pride

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON

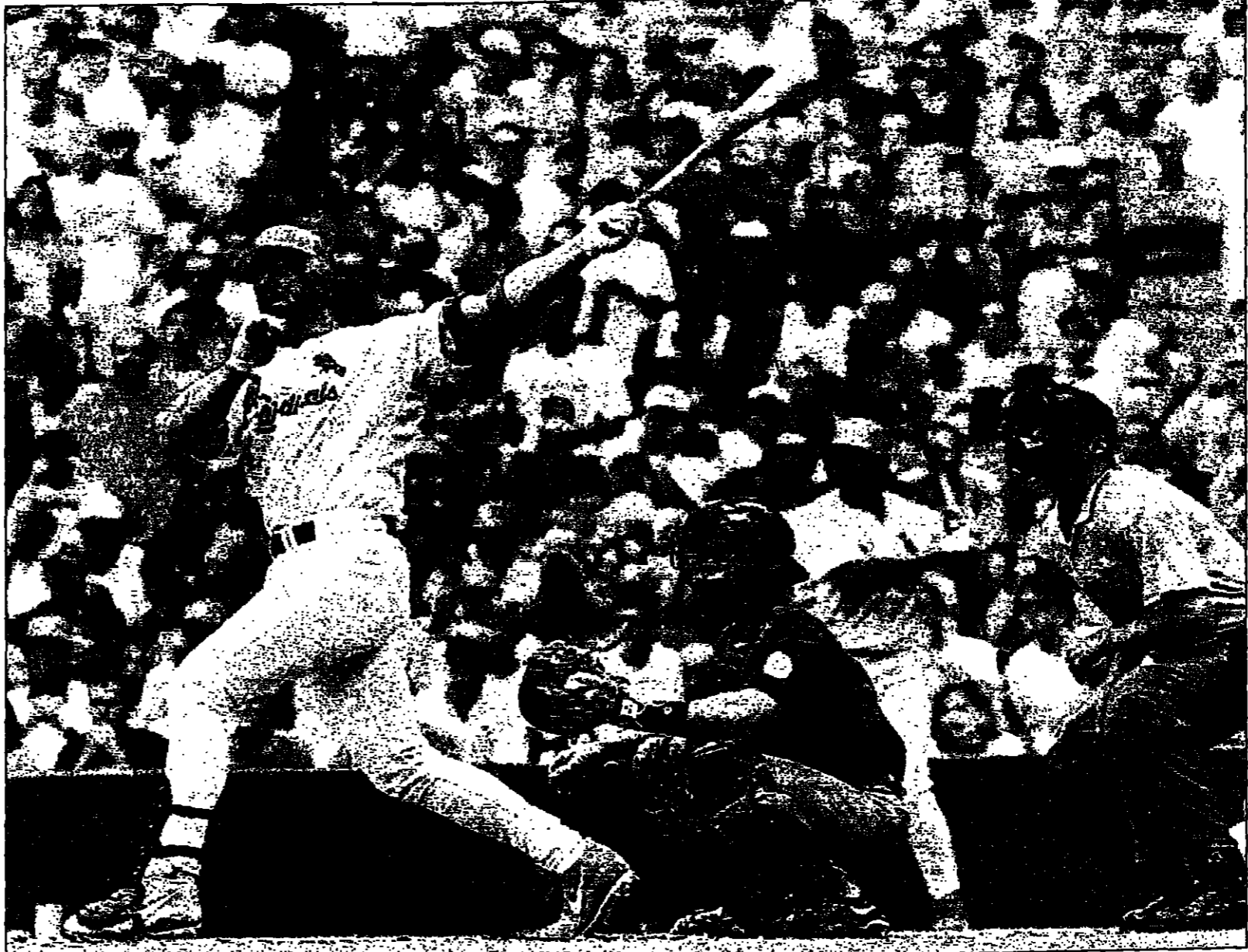
AMERICAN baseball star Mark McGwire was early today just one bat swing away from breaking the record for the most home runs scored in a single season.

He has already earned himself a place in the pantheon of sporting greats and is being hailed as an all-American hero at a time when the country is feeling in need of something to cheer about.

When the giant McGwire drove the ball into the crowd on Monday for his 61st home run of the season, equalling Roger Maris's 37-year-old record, he knocked the beleaguered President Clinton off the nation's screens and down to the bottom of the front pages.

For the past few weeks sports fans have been following every muscle-bound step of the race between the St Louis Cardinals' slugger and Sammy Sosa, of the Chicago Cubs, towards the most romanticised record in baseball. But as McGwire edged ahead and equalled the legendary Babe Ruth's tally of 60, even those who had hitherto ignored the game started talking about the action in the baseball diamond rather than the Oval Office.

As McGwire took to the field in St Louis against the Cubs again last night, he still had plenty of games left this season and, fitness permitting, it is just a question of when, not if, he sets a new record. It is the speed with which he has scored his 61 that has been astonishing. In



Mark McGwire hits his 61st homer of the season to equal the record set by Roger Maris in 1961. America now awaits the new record

1961, Maris eclipsed Ruth's 1927 record in 163 games, but McGwire has taken just 144, with 18 left to play.

When he faced the press after Monday's landmark, he had a soundbite ready. He had hit his 61st run on his father's 61st birthday, he explained. "What I kept thinking was what a great birthday present for my father."

The man with the best present, however, was widely

believed to be Mike Davidson, who had caught the ball McGwire smashed into the capacity crowd. He was escorted from the stadium by security guards because the ball that breaks the record is said by dealers in sporting memorabilia to be worth upwards of \$1 million (£606,060) and Monday's only a little less. Davidson said that he would give it to McGwire in return for an autographed

jersey. This was hailed in the media as a sign that baseball was not, as is often claimed, ruined by greed.

It is certainly true that McGwire and Sosa's race has been the best thing to happen to baseball in a long time. Stadiums that have not been full for almost 30 years have suddenly been sold out.

What has particularly captured the imagination has been the way that the person-

al duel between McGwire and Sosa has been interpreted as symbolising what is good about America. McGwire, a 6ft 4in colossus, is a rugged, white man from a comfortable, middle-class California background who peppers his quotes with references to his fate being in the hands of "the man upstairs".

Sosa is a shy, grinning, former shoeshine boy from the Dominican Republic who

spends much of his millions on his family and social projects back home.

The only thing commentators have not dwelt on is the fact that McGwire has admitted using a drug banned by the International Olympic Committee and the National Football League but not Major League Baseball.

Simon Barnes photograph, page 42

Clinton plea for Starr preview

White House struggles to stay ahead of game as President comes under more fire over Lewinsky scandal, writes Damian Whitworth

PRESIDENT CLINTON has asked for an advance copy of Kenneth Starr's report into his conduct so that he can publish an instant rebuttal, his lawyers said yesterday.

In a desperate manoeuvre which White House aides admit privately will probably fail, David Kendall, the President's personal lawyer, has called for special treatment from the independent prosecutor. Mr Kendall yesterday released copies of the letter to Mr Starr, appealing to the prosecutor's sense of "elemental fairness" in claiming that the President should be able to respond in advance to the sexually explicit report, expected imminently on Capitol Hill.

Mr Kendall's move came ahead of today's extraordinary, abruptly scheduled meeting of leaders of the House of Representatives and the Judiciary Committee. They are trying to decide which members of Congress should be allowed to see the

most sensational passages — in the hope, which they admit is forlorn, that the details can be confined to the committee room.

In a move likely to inflame the already simmering relations between Republicans and Democrats on the committee, Henry Hyde, the Republican chairman, is seeking unprecedented powers, including the authority to hold witnesses in contempt of Congress. That would allow Mr Hyde to order the arrest of witnesses who did not co-operate with the committee's inquiry.

Mr Clinton was hit by another rebuke from a fellow Democrat when Barbara Boxer took the floor of the Senate yesterday to launch an attack on his relationship with Monica

Lewinsky. "The relationship was immoral. The President has now agreed with that. He should have taken responsibility much earlier," she said.

The Judiciary Committee will be the first arena in which the President will battle for his survival. Given the explosive nature of the report, members may decide not to press ahead with hearings on it or on the President's impeachment until after the November mid-term elections.

The committee will weigh whether Mr Starr has produced enough evidence of what the Constitution calls "high crimes and misdemeanours" to warrant initiating impeachment proceedings, which could lead ultimately to a Senate vote on

whether the President should be removed.

Yesterday Mr Kendall said that he should be given the report before members of the House, and allowed a week to make a written reply. "You have had unlimited resources at your command and no practical restriction on your power to investigate every aspect of the President's life for the past four and one half years," Mr Kendall wrote. "Elemental fairness dictates that we be allowed to respond to any report you send to the House simultaneously with its transmission."

The move highlights the way in which the White House is struggling to appear in control as Washington awaits the report. The strategy, if Mr

Starr refuses to provide a preview, will be to claim that he is partisan and is attempting to gain maximum impact by surprising the President with a biased report.

The committee consists of 21 Republicans and 15 Democrats and includes Mary Bono — widow of Sonny Bono — Barney Frank, a Boston Democrat renowned for his wit and for being openly gay, and Orrin Hatch, once an extremist but now considered a moderate by the standards of many rightwingers.

There were signs yesterday that public pressure for Mr Clinton to resign was increasing. A bipartisan poll by one Democrat and one Republican pollster showed many Democrats believed the political system was "on the brink of moral bankruptcy" and would not vote in November's mid-term elections.

Leading article, Letters, page 19



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Sherrice Iverson, strangled in a casino lavatory, and Jeremy Strohmeyer, who has admitted killing her

Killer rapist avoids the death penalty

FROM TIM DAHLBERG IN LAS VEGAS

A TEENAGER accused of raping and strangling a seven-year-old girl to death in a Nevada casino lavatory pleaded guilty yesterday, avoiding the death penalty by agreeing to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Jeremy Strohmeyer, 19, said he kidnapped, molested and killed Sherrice Iverson on May 27 last year. Strohmeyer could have faced the death penalty if convicted, although during jury selection, several jurors said they would be reluctant to impose it. Strohmeyer answered "Yes, your honour." to questions

asked by Judge Myron Leavitt, describing the crime step-by-step. He pleaded guilty to murder and sexual assault charges. The judge asked if Strohmeyer understood the consequences of his plea, that he would never be released from prison. The defendant said he did.

The prosecution contended that Strohmeyer had admitted fantasising about sex with young girls. The defence had portrayed him as a troubled youth whose father is in prison and whose biological mother is in a psychiatric hospital. (AP)

ALAN CLARK FORUM

Alan Clark, the Tory MP, historian and celebrated diarist, will be speaking on his new book, *The Tories: Conservatives and the Nation State 1922-1997* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20) at a Times/Dillons Forum on Wednesday, September 16, 1998.

The forum will be chaired by Peter Stothard, Editor of *The Times*, and there will be an opportunity to put questions to the former Minister. The forum, the 50th in the Times/Dillons Forum series, will take place at 7.30pm at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. The admission price of £10 (concessions £7.50 for students, pensioners and the unemployed on production of valid I.D.) includes a reduction of £2 on copies of *The Tories*.

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Europe's passions stirred by arrival of sex pill

BY CHARLES BREMNER

VIAGRA's imminent launch in Europe is stirring the same excitement as it did in America, but the erection drug is also causing a headache for the cash-starved health managers of the Continent's welfare states.

Already struggling with vast debt, state health funds are in no condition to foot the bill for the expected millions of prescriptions for the blue tablet. Most southern countries will not subsidise Viagra without exceptional medical circumstances. Decisions on reimbursement, the usual method for prescriptions on the Continent, have yet to be taken in Germany. The Netherlands and several other states, but authorities and insurance firms are reluctant to pay for what many call "quality of life" medication.

The German federal doctors' and health insurers' association said it could not afford the "several billion" marks that reimbursement would cost. Those states which decide to pay for Viagra, at least partly, such as Sweden, The Netherlands and Belgium, are setting strict conditions.

For months the press and television have been awash with sensational claims for the pill, which is due to go on sale within weeks in EU member states. Viagra fever seems to be running strongest in the Latin states, with Italy winning the prize for media obsession. Italian men have been flocking to San Marino and into the Italian-speaking cantons of Switzerland for early stocks of the *pillola del amore* (love pill). "Viagra" pizza and ice-cream have been spotted in Naples. In France, a restaurateur in Thonon-les-Bains has been prosecuted for serving a "Viagra sauce".

A spokesman for Pfizer said the Latin clamour for Viagra may be helping to shatter a few myths about the culture of macho males. But North Europeans have also been ordering the drug on the Internet from Switzerland, Mexico and the United States. The Dutch press has reported widespread "recreational use" in The Netherlands.

South European males will suffer more than most from the cost of the pills, which are to go on sale for about £7 each. Recognising the obstacle of state health insurance, Pfizer has not sought to register the drug for reimbursement under national schemes in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal.

Predictably, the arrival of the blue pill has prompted a bout of moralising from Paris, aghast at the idea of handing taxpayers' funds to erection-seeking Frenchmen. Bernard Kouchner, the Minister of Health, says he will oppose reimbursement from the state insurance scheme. "Viagra makes a thing out of the act of love," he said. "Mais non! Love is a vast subject... We have to know if this is about a medicine or a recreational thing which makes life fun."

Leading article, page 19

French truckers stage blockade

Militant drivers declare 'Fatigue kills' in campaign for 48-hour working week, Ben Macintyre in Paris and Charles Bremner in Brussels report



A German lorry driver demonstrates his support for the French strike that brought traffic to a halt on a key Rhine bridge in Strasbourg

FRENCH lorry drivers spearheaded a protest against long working hours by blocking ports and borders yesterday.

The action prompted Neil Kinnock, the European Union Transport Commissioner, to intervene in an attempt to head off a repetition of the traffic chaos caused during last winter's strike by French truckers.

Showing a degree of sympathy about the drivers' complaints, Mr Kinnock and Padraig Flynn, the Social Affairs Commissioner, said they were fully aware of the strength of grievances over long working hours.

The demonstration yesterday, organised by the International Transport Workers' Federation and national unions, was intended as a thinly veiled threat of more serious industrial action by European lorry drivers unless demands for an improvement in working conditions and shorter hours are met.

In a statement, Mr Kinnock promised new European legislation to cut the drivers' hours if no solution were reached in transport industry talks by the end of this month.

Under the emerging pact, which will form the basis of a new law, drivers could not be required to work for more than an average of 48 hours a week. This could be extended

to 60 hours provided that it did not bring the average over 48 hours for the working month.

Such a pact would go well beyond existing limits to driving hours because working time would also include hours spent loading, unloading, supervising passengers and freight, cleaning and maintenance, a spokeswoman for the Commission said.

Transport workers had previously been excluded from the EU's 1993 working time directive, which was unsuccessfully fought in the EU courts by the last British Government.

France's militant lorry drivers, who staged crippling national strikes in 1996 and last year, led the protest yesterday, handing out leaflets, setting up filter barricades and in some places entirely blocking roads and port access.

Long tailbacks were reported at northern French Channel ports and on France's borders with Spain and Belgium. German drivers teamed up with their French counterparts to block traffic at border points, and similar protests were mounted at the Luxembourg, Swiss and Italian frontiers.

Drivers and truckers at Le Havre and Dieppe were delayed for hours, while the port of Cherbourg was briefly cut off by lorry barricades. There

were no barriers at Calais, but protesters stopped cars to air their grievances and distribute leaflets reading "Fatigue kills".

The protesters are demanding a maximum 48-hour week, pointing out that many road accidents are the result of driver fatigue. About 1,350 lorry drivers were killed on European roads last year, and 42,000 were injured.

The 24-hour strike will cost British industry at least £1 million and seriously disrupt delivery schedules in Europe, the British Freight Transport Association said. "Today's action is a show of strength and indicates that the demonstrations could be much worse this winter. This may be just the beginning," Daniel Hodges, spokesman for the Road Haulage Association in Britain, said.

John Reid, the Transport Minister, last night called on the French authorities and the Commission to act promptly to keep main routes open and minimise the effect of any strike action on British trucks.

During previous trucker disputes, the French Government had declined to clear road blockades by force.

Car-free day: Thirty-five

French towns and cities, including Paris, will enforce a partial ban on traffic in a trial set for September 22, Dominique Voynet, the Environment Minister, announced. Cars, except electric vehicles and those using liquefied petroleum gas, will be barred from 7am to 9pm. (AFP)

Kohl clutches at jobs straw in plea to east Germans

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN



HELMUT KOHL travelled to Weimar yesterday to win over the east of Germany, clutching the slender straw of a slight improvement in the crucial unemployment figures.

"It is getting better and better," he told the crowd — but east Germans, promised "blossoming landscapes" eight years ago, are not convinced and seem inclined to turn their backs on the Chancellor's Christian Democrats.

Unemployment fell last month, in the seasonally adjusted terms which are used as a political barometer, by 39,000 to 4.1 million, or 10.6 per cent of the workforce.

"I expect that in the coming months the number of unemployed will drop below four million and in the full year we will have fewer people out of work than in 1997," the Chancellor said. "The poverty development has stabilised."

The key to winning back east Germans — once enthusiastic supporters of the "Chancellor of unification" — is to demonstrate a definite shift in the tide. Many communities in the east still have more than 20 per cent unemployment, and the average jobless rate in the former Communist East Germany is 17.1 per cent. Unemployment came as a shock to east Germans after four decades of communism.

The situation in the east has eased for the past three months. "We can say that the turning point has been reached," said Bernhard Jagoda, head of the Federal Labour Agency. Yet the improvement — 12,000 new jobs last month — is almost entirely the result of job-creation schemes which, after cuts last year, are again receiving generous government funding.

The east is politically vul-

nerable to the crisis in Moscow since the Russian market remains a big factor in the export business of medium-sized companies. About 30,000 jobs are dependent on Russian trade. The positive trend could be reversed quickly.

The Social Democrats describe the unemployment figures as no more than a "tiny bit of sunshine". Their election campaign is almost entirely centred on the inability of the Chancellor to create new jobs. He has been dubbed the "Chancellor of unemployment" by his rival, Gerhard Schröder.

Most analysts agreed yesterday that Herr Kohl's failure to push the jobless figure below four million in the month before the general election has robbed him of a decisive vote-winner. This week he is to attend at least four election rallies in the east, compared with only one in Bavaria.

Christian Democrats still believe that the east can be saved for their party. They lag behind the Social Democrats by about 5 per cent and there are only 18 days to close the gap. Herr Kohl is gambling on a last-minute swing in his favour by some of the 53 per cent of Germans who say they are undecided.

Pope plans to canonise Pius XII

Rome: The Pope, who next month marks 20 years as pontiff, plans to canonise three of his immediate predecessors — Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI — and hopes to proclaim them saints in time for the millennium, according to Italian media reports (Richard Owen writes).

The prospect of Pius XII (1939-58) being declared a saint has aroused opposition among Jewish and other groups because of his alleged failure to help victims of the Nazi Holocaust during the Second World War.

Vatican watchers said the implication of the proposal was that sainthood would become "almost automatic" for pontiffs, as in early Christian times.

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RICHARD BRANSON: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

How I forced BA to eat their words



In the third extract from his autobiography, Richard Branson tells how he exposed British Airways' dirty tricks, and won a record-breaking libel settlement



Deadly commercial enemies: Richard Branson and Lord King of Warrnaby, then chairman of BA, bumped into each other a few days after Virgin's victory

The row with BA had one immediate casualty that I should have foreseen. One of their objectives was to stop me expanding Virgin Atlantic and the only way I could do that was by refinancing the airline. The louder I complained about their dirty tricks, the less any other airline, venture-capital house, or other investor wanted to invest in Virgin Atlantic.

booked. Would she mind changing to a British Airways flight? This was the last straw. Yvonne Parsons had flown to and from the States four times in the past eight months and each time there had been an alleged "booking error" with Virgin. All of the callers had failed to contact her again. On one occasion when she had tried to contact the caller herself — a "Mary Ann" — she was told there was no such employee at Virgin. She was furious with Virgin and switched to American Airlines and United for her flights. When she decided to give Virgin one last try, she couldn't believe it when another member of the Virgin reservations staff called her to tell her that the flight was overbooked and would she mind flying British Airways.

I must have been the victim of an elaborate and disgraceful deception by British Airways. I'd always been offered flights on British Airways, never on other airlines. I wondered whether these people were British Airways staff impersonating Virgin.

"We've got an amazing statement," our lawyer told me. "We could build a court case around her alone."

"Well, as I told Frank Kane, if you publish it, I'll have no choice but to sue you for defamation."

very hard to put me out of business and my staff out of their jobs. They had also forced me to sell Virgin Music, which had affected a whole group of other people who had nothing to do with the airline. It made me furious. I was not going to sit back over a gentleman's breakfast and agree that it was all just a certain amount of "egg on face".

THE TIMES

THURSDAY

30p

In tomorrow's 30p Times, read exclusive extracts from Richard Branson's autobiography, *Losing My Virginity*.

"What is it?"

"It's of two men talking, and I think one of them's Colin Marshall [of BA]."

"What are they saying?"

"They're talking about the *Violating Virginity* programme and they mention Chris Hutchins [of *Today* newspaper] and the Basham tape [Brian Basham was BA's PR man and had been recorded by Hutchins making apparently compromising statements]. And one of them says that there's a clear case for defamation and he's very close to instituting proceedings against the programme."

I asked Chris Moss to send the tape to me. I wondered who on earth could have sent it to us. Somebody had apparently bugged British Airways' phones. At first I was lulled into thinking that somebody was being helpful, but I soon realised that it could be a trap. I decided to send it straight back to BA for the personal attention of Sir Colin Marshall.

The next Saturday, Frank Kane, then a journalist with *The Sunday Telegraph*, rang. "I gather that you've employed private detectives to investigate British Airways," he started. "I've also got proof that you're phone-tapping and my sources inside Virgin have told me that Tiny Rowland is egging you on and that he is also employing Freddie Laker."

"Don't be ridiculous, Frank," I said. "That's complete bollocks."

"I've been told that the detective agency you're using is the American operation IGI and that Goldman Sachs have also been involved."

"Frank, I've never issued a writ against a newspaper but if you really think that you can publish that then I'll have to sue you."

I called up *The Sunday Telegraph* and got put through to Trevor Grove, the Editor.

"This is a mad story," I said. "You can't possibly publish it."

I knew that Frank Kane was in the office with him because there was a pause before he answered.



After Virgin's victory, Branson received a card which read: "Dear Richard, Hurrah! Love from Diana"

Immediately after Khalifa's affidavit arrived at BA's lawyers, I received a call from Michael Davis, a BA non-executive director who was a longstanding friend of my parents. He asked me whether we could meet for breakfast.

At our meeting, Michael began talking about "egg on face". This was the first hint of apology. He had obviously been singled out as the one non-executive who could talk to me.

I watched Michael Davis grope for the appropriate words. Reading between the lines, he was telling me that Lord King's days at British Airways were over. "I think you, me and Sir Colin [Marshall] should sit down together."

As I listened to his tortured syntax and his attempt to offer me a deal, I realised that I was listening to someone talking about somebody else's money and somebody else's livelihood. But Virgin Atlantic was primarily my own company. So, for all his talk of "egg on face", Michael Davis was missing the point: BA had tried

Throughout the entire dirty-tricks episode I had been accused of being "naive": naive to believe that British Airways could behave in such a manner, naive to think that British Airways would ever stop behaving in such a manner, naive to believe that I would ever be able to bring British Airways to court, naive to think for a moment that I could win a court case. I was determined to make all those people who had dismissed my stance as naive eat their words.

I called Michael Davis and told him that I couldn't agree to let my accusations slip under the carpet. The court case was set to start in January and the British Airways directors would be cross-examined by George Carman. I didn't even need to hint at how much Carman would relish this.

But on December 7, 1992, the BA case collapsed. George told me: "They have paid £485,000 into court. They've admitted in effect that they're entirely guilty as charged."

At first I was in two minds over whether to accept the money. I was innocent and we could put all the BA directors in the witness box and destroy them. But then, as we talked about it, I realised that such a move could be seen to be vindictive and was highly risky.

"You've got to remember why you brought this case," George advised me. "You wanted the dirty tricks to stop and you wanted to clear your name. BA have admitted that you are totally right. You've cleared your name."

"What do we have to do now, then?" I asked.

"We have 21 days in which to take the money out of court if we're going to accept it."

"So we'll do that?"

"Good Lord, no," George said, looking shocked. "I'm going to get them to give us at least £600,000. Every £100,000 makes an inch bigger headline."

George spent a week negotiating over the payment. On December 11, 1992, we agreed the terms of the highest uncontested libel payment ever made in Britain: £500,000 to me to compensate for the personal libel and £110,000 to Virgin Atlantic to compensate for the corporate libel.

"Virgin screws BA" was *The Sun's* headline. There wasn't much room for anything else on the front page. "I'd have preferred it the other way round," Kelvin MacKenzie, *The Sun's* Editor, told me. "It would have made a better headline."

I was terrified my son was dying

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Mothers-to-be: Posh Spice, left, and Scary in action

Why Spice babies won't start a boom

Pop icons should not be held responsible for teenage pregnancies. Anjana Ahuja reports

First there was Melanie Blatt from the girl band All Saints proudly parading her swollen tummy to, among others, the Prince of Wales. Then Posh and Scary announced that they were pregnant. The Saint and two Spices squealed excitedly that they would be keeping their babies. Within weeks, Girl Power had become Pram Power and a tell-tale bump was the hottest fashion accessory in town.

girls. "I think these comments are a real shame," says Julie Burnstone, features editor of *Mizz*, a magazine aimed at girls aged 12 to 15. "The Spice Girls are in their twenties and are in stable relationships. They have never openly done anything to be ashamed of, such as drink and take drugs. And they have shown that women can make their own fortunes and careers without a man."

Then again, having a child is a personal matter. They may wish to keep things private. "The British Pregnancy Advisory Service, which provides counselling, advice and medical assistance to women of all ages, also doubts that it will see a flood of teenage girls keen to emulate their pop heroines. "Since we set up in 1967, we have never seen an influx of girls prompted by any one reason," says a spokesman. "I don't think two or three pop stars getting pregnant is going to make any difference."

same period last year. We would be much more worried if the rise was 10 or 20 per cent. And remember, we are still seeing the effects of the Pill scare.

pursue careers at the expense of starting a family. "I don't like the idea that girls always have babies to increase their self-esteem, or to replace a career. The maternal instinct is very strong, and motherhood is a valid career in itself. It is natural for a sexually active girl in a loving relationship to want children. Even the most hardened feminists would agree. It is a way of fulfilling themselves. To say 'this girl can't have a career so she must have babies' is as absurd as saying 'this girl is infertile so she must have a career'. What's so special about having a career? "It's patronising to think that girls of 16 have babies for different reasons than other women. That they are frivolous about it. There is a 'we know better' attitude that comes out when people talk about teenage mothers. Perhaps their reasons for having children are the same as everyone else's."

British Pregnancy Advisory Service helpline: (08457 304030)

I was terrified my son was dying

Novelist Douglas Kennedy on the ordeal of his child's illness. Interview by Moira Petty

Douglas Kennedy, master of the decline-and-fall thriller, has just earned his second advanced royalties cheque of \$1.1 million (£666,000). Two years ago, he was living in a "cramped flat" in southwest London with his Irish wife, Grace, and two small children. Then he delivered the manuscript of *The Big Picture*, an enthralling tale of a Wall Street lawyer prepared to sacrifice everything for freedom. The first big payday had arrived.



Irish-American author Douglas Kennedy had recently achieved success with his decline-and-fall thrillers when his son became ill, plunging his newly comfortable life into uncertainty.

was taken seriously ill. He had suffered from epileptic fits in January but seemed to have recovered. In May, what Kennedy calls "the shudders" started again.

Max's condition was finally stabilised. Now he is on medication and attends a fee-paying special school. Kennedy does not want to talk about Max's specific condition and was reluctant to speak about the recent events. Kennedy has turned down offers to write an account, while conceding that some of it might find its way into his fiction.

He was also leaving behind an "isolated and lonely" childhood. "I was severely knock-kneed as a kid and wore orthopaedic shoes until I was 11. I discovered music and movies which I'd go to on my own."

Although they are still together, his parents' marriage was not happy. "It was not the quietest of households," he says cryptically. His father, Thomas, was a metals broker, but not in the highest salary league. The family of five — Kennedy had two younger brothers — lived in a two-bedroom Manhattan apartment.

His books are full of descriptions of homes, clothes, shopping trips. "The material is one way in which people define themselves," he says. Yet apart from his house, his only indulgence has been a good sound system and the 20-volume *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

vert. I'm amused by bad lyrical prose. You can write in a straight way and still deal with emotional issues. You won't read sex scenes in my books because I believe that they should happen off the page. By and large, sex scenes are an excuse for extremely bad writing."

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Like most men I guess I was afraid of being a father'



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Hillary's best chance: divorce him

The First Lady has a future — alone, says Bronwen Maddox

As the best-known Democrats in the United States queue to distance themselves from their President, the one who should be leading the pack is Hillary Clinton.

Democrats have fallen out of love with President Clinton for good reason: his wife has even more cause to feel the same. They have calculated, correctly, that their best chance of survival lies in stunning him. If she has hopes of a political career after the White House — as she should — she too must recognise that he has become a liability.

Mr Clinton has achieved the political feat he managed in both elections: uniting his deeply divided party. But this time the Democrats are united against him. From the conservative Senator Joe Lieberman to the liberal Daniel Patrick Moynihan, their chastisement of the President has blanketed out his trips to Russia and Ireland from the nation's television screens.

In a sense, their condemnation is premature. Their fate in the November congressional elections, and Mr Clinton's survival, will depend on the public's reaction to the imminent report from the independent counsel, Kenneth Starr. At the moment, voters are determined to distinguish between Bill Clinton as a President — top marks — and as a "human being" — not so good. The question is whether the explicit details we are promised in the report will give so vivid an image of a messy sexual encounter that Americans inconspicuously recoil from him — and his party.

But Democrats are right that something has irrevocably changed: Mr Clinton's near-magical appeal is withering. His charm has acquired a sleazy patina; his charisma appears repellently manipulative. There is no doubt he had an extraordinary gift of making people feel special, rather like the late Princess of Wales. Even if they professed to dislike him, they would come away from the blotterch gaze, the over-large handshake, with a foolish smile.

Outside Ireland, it is hard for him to pull off that trick, now that it is clear how compulsively promiscuous is his attention. Nor does his undoubted intelligence hold the appeal it had; the sheer folly of the Lewinsky affair negates that.

But it is, perhaps above all, the exploitative and selfish quality of his behaviour towards "that woman, Miss Lewinsky" that strips away the final remnants of his charm. She may sell her story for \$10 million — reckoning that after Mr Starr's verbal stripsearch she has not more privacy to lose — but there is still an important nugget of truth in the portrait of her as a starstruck young girl, seduced into an encounter which has ruined her life. The President's insistence on calling her a giddy, besotted liar, together with Jennifer Flowers and Paula Jones, removes any last claim to the paternal qualities so

appreciated in the nation's leader.

To recoil from Mr Clinton now is not to endorse all the current attacks on him. One of the least likeable strains in American culture is its harsh puritanism, articulated with a viciousness worthy of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. And often with hypocrisy; many Republicans sniggered this week-end when one of their own, Dan Burton, who has been one of Mr Clinton's harshest moral critics, was forced to reveal that he had fathered an illegitimate son.

Hillary Clinton is right to claim that many conservatives who have long hated Clinton for his policies are now using the Lewinsky scandal as a way of legitimising their extreme venom. One *New York Post* columnist yesterday attacked "Clinton's legacy as the architect of American infanticide", because of his support for abortion rights, calling him "literally the modern Herod".

But for all the sanctimony and excess of some attacks, Democrats are right that his appeal is disintegrating, and they are right to leave him. Hillary should now do the same.

Clinton has united his party — but against himself

Many claim that the Clintons' marriage is a "political contract", but this seems to be nonsense. They have been deeply involved with each other, ever since she quit the legal fast-track to marry him and move to Arkansas. To say she believed passionately in their joint political project is not at all the same thing as saying that she is interested only in power.

Yes, Hillary has now been humiliated by his infidelity; that will surely be compounded when the details of Mr Starr's report are known. But the disillusionment may well be worse. She appeared to love him, despite his faults, partly from the conviction that he had extraordinary gifts which he would devote to the causes in which they both believed.

She may still find him lovable. But there is no doubt her own credibility suffers while she stays with him. She may be one of America's brightest lawyers, but she was either seriously "mised" when she defended him so vehemently in January, or she lied.

There is much speculation about whether Hillary will run for a governorship or for the Senate when the Clintons leave the White House. If she does, she would have an excellent chance. Even more than her husband, she stands for the centre ground which has proved politically so fruitful; a Republican turned Democrat, she is a strong Methodist. It is an achievable ambition that would make better use of her formidable strengths than defending a fading charmer.

But if she wants a political career, she will have to distance herself from her husband as clearly as Democratic senators are now doing. Not immediately, perhaps, but at some point, she would have to leave him.



Scientific terrorism

Vague talk of risk by experts can ruin an industry — but it boosts research

Just imagine. You have read about the Swiss disaster and are about to fly in a plane of the same make. As you leave for the airport, you read a report from a government scientist. He says that, in his opinion, there is "a very real risk" of the same fault occurring in other planes of the type. "If this distinct possibility is true," he goes on, "it would be an emergency."

What on earth do you do? Do you fly anyway, change your flight, or wait for the Government to ground every plane? After all, the man is an official scientist. He has gone public. He purports to know.

Those were the exact words that a member of the Government's bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (Seac), Professor Jeffrey Almond, used this week about lamb. You will recall that BSE led to one of the worst outbreaks of mad-politician disease in 1995-97. Nobody today should need warning to be cautious. The outbreak followed a tiny number of cases of human CJD, which had been tenuously linked to BSE in cattle. BSE was caused by polluting cattle feed with infected cow tissue, a practice stopped some years earlier.

Twenty-seven deaths have been attributed to CJD, many fewer than to such food poisons as *E. coli* or salmonella which we seem to take in our stride. Yet as a result of the resulting hysteria, and with continental farmers eagerly in the van, the beef industry was devastated. Tens of thousands of cattle were fed to power stations and some £5 billion of public money was squandered. The root cause was a group of scientists changing an "inconceivable risk" of contracting CJD from eating beef (in 1995) to a "very small" one (in 1996).

Science terrorism takes the following form. You isolate a small quantity of statistics, attach to it a lengthy fuse of language, and leave it in a public place for a politician to trip over. More disreputable practitioners then telephone a message to the press demanding a large sum of money for "more research", to be deposited in a named university.

Thus Mr Almond this week. He is chairman of the "sheep subcommittee" of Seac, whose former members produced the adjectival high-jinks that led to the 1996 fiasco. This is now being investigated, we hope with due rigour, by Lord Justice Phillips's inquiry. Mr Almond's sheep committee

appears to have missed out on a full share of the research gusher unleashed on his "bovine" colleagues during the crisis. Obsessed with mad cows, we forgot about mad sheep, mad goats and other consumable and researchable quadrupeds.

After the BSE scare and as a precautionary measure, Britain (alone in Europe) has banned sheep tissue from the food chain. Seac scientists also checked for BSE in sheep, as distinct from the sheep version called scrapie, but found none. Even at the height of the scare, the risk of any Briton ever catching CJD from beef was put at between one in 50 million and one in a billion, surely the bottom of any Richter scale of danger.

In which case, the risk now of catching CJD from sheep which "might" have inherited BSE from some leakage into flocks years ago would defy even the most fantastical risk theorist. Seac had told the Government's Chief Medical Officer that there were "no grounds" for taking action on sheep.

Mr Almond is made of sterner stuff. This week he produced the following logical sequence for *Nature* magazine, repeated on the BBC. Since BSE has the same symptoms in sheep as scrapie, it would go undetected. Therefore sheep with scrapie, which is harmless to humans, may have BSE, which can possibly transmit harm, without us knowing. Mr Almond's committee investigated nine sheep with scrapie and found no trace of BSE. "But what confidence can we attach to the statement 'BSE is not present in sheep'?" asks Mr Almond. "Absence of evidence is often confused with evidence of absence."

In the circumstance, I would attach total confidence to such a statement. Any layman gazing at a lamb crouched and wondering if a panic-stricken Cabinet was about to ban it and charge him a further 1p on income tax for the farmers, might even ask a few questions. For instance, what is the point in testing nine sheep, at £30,000

a time, if the test is treated as meaningless? There are 40 million sheep out there. Do we test them all, on so wild an off-chance? Mr Almond asks, suppose just 0.1 per cent of the nation's flock had BSE, it would represent thousands of animals. It would indeed, but this is the oldest of statisticians' tricks. Grab from the air an apparently trivial percentage and then reveal it as a huge number. I might as well reply, suppose only 0.000000001 per cent had BSE, then what?

If BSE were to be found in sheep, incants Mr Almond in the face of all the evidence, "that could pose a risk to humans... we could be facing a potential national emergency." We note the use of conditionals, "if... could be... potential". They are chosen like the words of an opposition politician to win publicity yet deflect a charge of scaremongering. Then there is the menacing coda: "I think politicians would have to think very hard about what the appropriate response would be." In other words, pay up or else.

A scientist using such phrases knows what he is about. A "distinct possibility" is converted by headline writers into "Alarm grows over sheep... Europe to check on lamb safety... More research urgently needed". Nor are other lobbies far behind. The Consumers' Association asks if the Health Department will "consider advising parents not to feed lamb to young children". It thus shifts the burden of a ban on to Government. The introduction of "babes and sucklings" is another familiar twist.

This week's scare brings into dispute a respectable field of research — into prion proteins in the brain cells of animals — apparently to raise money. It also debases public policy. The BSE fiasco cost British taxpayers more than the Falklands War. Most has gone in compensation to farmers for a pollutant which, in any other industry, would have been financed by a civil suit between victims, farmers and the cattle-feed industry. I am told

that £150 million has been paid by the Treasury to the same feed companies whose practices caused the BSE epidemic in the first place. These are vast sums by any reckoning.

In a book out this week called *Conscience*, the American scientist Edward O. Wilson calls on his colleagues to seize the high ground from the humanities. Scientists must teach economists, politicians, philosophers, even musicians how to reason, he says. They must boast the new discoveries in behavioural psychology, cultural genetics and brain chemistry. Wilson offers a rollicking good read. But the book is sometimes on the other foot. When scientists cross into politics they too can get in a terrible mess.

When a scientist peers over his glasses, lowers his voice an octave and intones "I have discovered a risk", how are we supposed to react? We all take risks, every hour of every day. How much risk does this mean? Why does he not give figures, rather than use vague phrases such as "very small" or "distinct possibility"? The average Briton takes a bigger risk with a single Mediterranean *plat du jour* than in a lifetime's subjugation to Whitehall's health and safety mafia. Talk of risk is costly mumbo jumbo, designed to make us quake at the feet of Big Science.

Other professions that play fast and loose with public fear are subject to ethical review. Mischievous doctors answer to the General Medical Council, accountants have audit, policemen take sick-leave, politicians get the sack. Scientists can apparently terrify with impunity. Wilson is right. Biology is plunging ever deeper into mortality. That plunge is a measure of its importance, ethically controversial and even dangerous: witness the inexcusable attacks by "animal activists" on Colin Blakemore, the current president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Such science, and such scientists, must be supported and encouraged.

Yet I cannot believe science really wants politicians or the media to police its ethical frontiers. When scientists go astray, surely they would prefer their peers to hold them to public account. Self-regulation is the measure of a mature profession. Assessing risk in food in recent years has not cast science in a good light. Let science itself set the record straight.

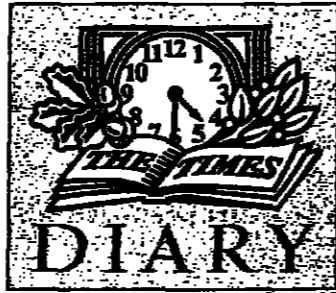
Rich pickings

SLING your garlic crusher. Marco Pierre White. Geoffrey Robinson is buying into the restaurant trade. The plutocratic Paymaster General (below right) has offered to dig (fairly) deep to rescue the Gay Hussar, that conspiratorial Soho haunt of old Labour. But his philanthropy could be thwarted by the ghost of egalitarianism past, Michael Foot (left). He is backing a workers' buyout. The endearingly stodgy Hungarian trough has served wild cherry soup to comrades from Nye Bevan to Robin Cook, alongside Ken Clarke and Lord Longford, for more than 50 years. With Blairite foodies preferring the sun-dried tomatoes of Granita, Roy Ackerman, the Hussar's owner, decided to sell. Robinson, a regular, has been urged to prevent the Hussar being swallowed up by Soho's more exotic outlets and has offered £180,000 to become proprietor. "There is no problem with Geoffrey buying it," says a senior Treasury type. "He will list it in the Register of Members' Interests."

But Foot is still waving his walking stick in indignation to keep his Hungarian sausage out of Robinson's grasping hands. "Geoffrey has made a very good offer and he is well-intentioned, but I believe the management no longer wants to sell," says Foot. "I have been eating there since the war and it is the staff who must be credited for maintaining its tradition." Robinson has given the Hussar a double



CONFESSIONS of a driving instructor. The man who taught John Lennon the finer points of the three-point turn is the latest to tout his memoirs of the rocker. Paul Wilson instructed Lennon in Weybridge in 1965 and would pick him up in his Morris Minor. He recalls



"hordes of girls" following, apeing the manoeuvres in their own cars: "I asked John how he managed being chased all day and he replied that he had had to get used to it, and 'you will bloody well have to as well'." The Morris became such a familiar sight they had to switch to Cynthia Lennon's Mini. About 200 girls turned up on the day of the test. "When he passed there was much kissing and joy and almost immediately John bought a Ferrari." Publishers need not worry about the book's length — Wilson also taught Bernard Cribbins.

Painted lady

THE lady is for posing. Baroness Thatcher is sitting for ever more portraits. The alarming portrait by James Gillick will soon be followed by another daub of the grande

dame: Thatcher was unable to make the launch of Chris Patten's Hong Kong memoirs on Monday because of a prior engagement with the case of Nelson Stanks, the last to paint Diana, Princess of Wales (detail below). Maggie's pictures are stacking up: the National Portrait Gallery has at least eight. The cost of vanity? Diana spent 50 hours posing for her portrait in 1994. How does Thatcher find the time? "Well, we are a bit portraited out at the moment," admits a tired, first-person pluralist in her office...

EMMA THOMPSON had a bad hair day before compering an "evening of music" at the Royal Festival Hall for Victor Jara, the Chilean protest singer who fell foul of General Pinochet. Her stylist failed to show up, prompting a last-minute *l'uvvie-fret*.

Sports injury TONY BANKS was invited to Hull for the weekend, lucky chap. He was to celebrate Humber's Olympic games for wheelchair athletes. Sadly, the Sports Minister came down with an injury, so he rang to say his doctor had ordered him to stay in bed. Jim Thomas, Hull's Olympic supremo, suspects that a miraculous recovery enabled the minister to entertain Sir David Frost: "We are upset. On telly he said he had been out to get the papers. I have a cold and I made it."

NICHOLAS COLERIDGE, the suprema at *Condé Nast*, has received a slapped wrist for claiming that Tatler is "the world's oldest magazine". When the claim was taken up by the Advertising Standards Authority, the group was unable to substantiate its puff.

Wizard role

LORD HEALEY is to take to the stage once more. He is to appear with an amateur operatic troupe in Sussex during its "saunter through songs from the shows". The Barn Theatre Company in Seaford is to belt out *My Fair Lady* and *South Pacific*. Healey will join the entertainers to perform *Michael* and the *Leon*, a party trick at the expense of Michael Heseltine and Sir Leon Britan. Healey volunteered after he and Edna, his wife, were made the group's joint presidents. He can call on his time on *Nationwide* in 1977 when he took the lead in *The Wizard of Oz* (above) with Sue Lawley and Richard Stilgoe.



JASPER GERARD

Alan Coren



End of the world is nigh, you say? It doesn't bug me

I am very excited this morning. Better yet, what has excited me means not only that tomorrow morning I shall be more excited but also that this excitement will grow progressively for a further 475 mornings until, heart thumping, I arrive at the most exciting morning of all.

What is especially pleasing about all this mounting excitement is that before this morning I had become reconciled to the high probability that nothing exciting would ever happen to me again. Having spent six long decades clambering up life's little peaks and tumbling into life's little troughs, I had finally reached life's little plateau, where nothing of any moment would thereafter occur until the moment came for me to roll off it. Oh, it was pleasant enough, this plateau, food in the fridge, booze in the cellar, books and CDs and videos on the shelves, slippers for the feet, a rug for the knees, any amount of smug beige cardigans hanging on their pegs; but it was, for all that, a plateau. It was flat. Nothing would ever happen here. Nobody, now, would arrive with an urgent invitation for me to form a government, or pole-vault for England, or shuttle to Mars, or enter the Eurovision Song Contest, or ship up the Eiger, or buy Manchester United, or tunnel into Asprey's cellar, because once you had reached the plateau, it was too late. You were past it.

Or so, until an hour ago, I believed. But now, suddenly, I believe the opposite: I believe that the possibility of future excitement is in fact far greater than it has ever been. Furthermore, I need do nothing to bring it about, because the bringing about is not in my hands. It will all be brought about for me. In just 475 days time, I may, for example, find myself commissioned into the 17th/21st Lancers and ordered to parachute into Iraq within the hour, horse and all. Then again, I might, by the seifsame post, be appointed chief executive of Thames Water. Possibly even both: I could become the first chairman of a public utility to canter into Baghdad at the head of a cavalry column.

Unless, of course, the second post brought, while I was still packing, a letter from Waitrose stating that I had been overcharged on my last bill and enclosing a cheque for £7 million pounds. If that happened, I might have to move my suitcase, sit on the bed, and have a bit of a think about resigning my commission. Especially if, mid-think, the phone rang to announce that my world tennis ranking had just gone up from 978,944 to 3. What then?

Mind you, the excitement could just as easily take a less benign form. There is a chance, that morning, of my being rudely awoken by the honk of SAS megaphones declaring that my house is surrounded and giving me one minute to lay down my gun and come out with my hands up. And it would be useless to protest that they had the wrong man, given that my fingerprints, DNA, dental records and hat size exactly matched those printed out by the MoD computer.

Yes, there is the word you have all been waiting for. Particularly if you have calculated that 475 days from now it will be January 1, 2000. For what I have been doing this past hour is reading a moribund booklet about the millennium bug, sent to me by a computer in order to alert the small business it thinks I am to the problems it thinks I might run into. It doesn't know I am not a small business, because it is only a computer and has bugs of its own. Thus it doesn't know that, even as it listed the potential nightmares ahead, it was obversely compiling a hidden list of the potential thrills: it exhorts me to avert the cock-up, not twiggling that the cock-up is precisely what I seek.

Hitherto, I hadn't looked forward to New Century's Day at all, but now I can hardly wait. And no, I am not made of flint, don't write in, I know that three weeks in an unstoppable Central Line train won't be much fun, waiting for a new wig will be even less. I do indeed tremble at the prospect of all those erroneous repossessions, unfounded sackings, fourpenny annuities, and molten freezers, never mind an involuntary cruise strike on Cricklewood, but, up here on the plateau, anticipations' selfish glee, I fear, prevails. Up here, I have seen the future, and it doesn't work. Which works for me.

سكزا من الأصيل

OBITUARIES

PROFESSOR W. B. GALLIE

Professor W. B. Gallie, philosopher, died in Cardiff on August 31 aged 85. He was born near Glasgow on October 5, 1912.

Bryce Gallie was more of a humanist than a technical philosopher, and disliked the narrow cleverness of some 20th-century philosophy. He was deeply interested in the arts, education and politics, and published on the philosophy of both science and history.

undergraduate years, partly (he tells us) because, as a philosopher "I went after that 'Cambridge crowd'". Gallie always declared however, that Lindsay's lectures had "given me more than anything else I had found in Oxford".

deer the weather", and his arrival at Keele coincided with one of these. He was even held back a little by his desire not to seem too much of a Lindsay fan; but he agreed with his new principal on the teaching of philosophy, and as controversy ran high, he became one of the people most particularly trusted by him.

He quickly emerged as a stimulating influence at the Queen's University, and his arrival in Belfast coincided with the opening of a particularly fruitful period in his philosophical work. He soon produced his essay on "Essentially Contested Concepts", and after this he addressed himself to the problem of history in *Philosophy and Historical Understanding* (1964).

Before leaving Belfast, he had begun to move in a new direction, and was working on the problem of war, which bore fruit in his last books, *Philosophers of Peace and War* (1978) and *Understanding War* (1990). This change in his interests helps to explain his migration in 1967 to the chair of political science at Cambridge, where students of politics were feeling a death of the philosophical side.



Gallie: his philosophical work showed an admirable humanism and ranged widely, but was never fully developed

LAL WATERSON

Lal Waterson, folk singer and songwriter, died from cancer on September 4 aged 55. She was born on February 15, 1943.

A MEMBER of Britain's foremost family of traditional singers, Lal Waterson had a plaintive voice that was one of the great glories of English folk music.



Lal Waterson with her folk singer son Oliver Knight

The Waterson family came from Hull, and music was always in the blood. But Elaine Waterson's first love was painting and she went to a school specialising in art at the age of 11.

in 1964 on the New Voices anthology on the independent Topic label, for whom Lal Waterson was still recording when she died.

ing Steve Winwood, who later took the song *John Barleycorn* for the title track of a Traffic album. Further albums — *The Watersons and A Yorkshire Garland* — were to follow, but the group retired from touring in 1968 to a farm on the Yorkshire Moors near Robin Hood's Bay.

writing original songs in a contemporary folk style, resulting in their joint 1972 album *Bright Phoebus*. They were accompanied for the first time by a band that included Richard Thompson and Ashley Hutchings from Fairport Convention, and Tim Hart and Maddy Prior of Steeleye Span, and the album caused consternation among folk purists for eschewing traditional material.

SIR HORACE HEYMAN

Sir Horace Heyman, industrialist, died on September 4 aged 86. He was born on March 13, 1912.

such as June Tabor and Anne Briggs hailed the emergence of a significant new writer and recorded covers of her songs.

By the mid-1970s the Watersons were back on the road with Norma's husband Martin Carthy replacing Harrison. Their record *For Peace and Spicy Ale* was voted folk album of the year by *Melody Maker* in 1975.

Never a prolific writer, Lal Waterson disappeared from the recording scene until two years ago when she returned with *Once in a Blue Moon*, a critically acclaimed album of a dozen new songs accompanied by her son Oliver Knight on guitar.

A SUCCESSFUL industrialist until he was 52, Sir Horace Heyman went on to make an outstanding contribution to the transition of the North East from a bastion of the Industrial Revolution, with its traditional coalmining, steelworking and shipbuilding interests, into a magnet for so-called "sunrise" industries.

He developed Smith's into the largest manufacturer of electrically driven vehicles in Europe, expanding their use from the traditional milkfloats to other applications, such as refuse trucks. Throughout his time at Smith's, he turned his restless, inquiring mind to improving the company's products. His most notable ad-

vance was the development of a new control system for electric vehicles, known as Sevcon, which was spun off into a separate company.

He also developed products in the food transport industry: vehicles for the delivery of meat, groceries, fish and ice-cream. Through a joint venture with J Lyons and its American parent, he captured the exclusive rights for the manufacture of vehicles for Mr Softee.

He is survived by his second wife, Dorothy, whom he married in 1966, and by a son and daughter from his first marriage.

exports and inward investment to the Northern Region of the Board of Trade. His success led to his appointment as chairman of the English Industrial Estates Corporation in 1970.

He was appointed a governor of Newcastle Polytechnic (now the University of Northumbria) in 1974, and was vice-chairman from 1983 to 1986, and became an honorary fellow in 1985.

He is survived by his second wife, Dorothy, whom he married in 1966, and by a son and daughter from his first marriage.

TONY THISTLETHWAITE

R. A. F. Thistlethwaite, former chief press officer of the British Medical Association, died on September 4 aged 71. He was born on November 14, 1926.

TO THOSE who knew him R. A. F. Thistlethwaite was simply "Tony T.", a gentle giant standing 6ft 2in in a frame to match. His initials and his tongue-twisting northern surname once led to a description of him as "a man who sounds like a bomber station wherever in North Yorkshire".

Birmingham Medical School before deciding against medicine. He read history at St Catherine's College, Oxford, and after graduating worked in a library and at bookbinding. There followed a short spell in journalism in Birmingham and Manchester, but he soon moved into public relations with the National Rubber Development Board and the Egg Marketing Board.

nights at Alexander Fleming House, the NHS headquarters, as doctors confronted ministers on the issues of the day. The rapid expansion in all branches of medicine, plus increasing technology and public interest in health matters, meant ever more work for Thistlethwaite and his staff at Tavistock House. But however contentious the subject of press inquiries — from the ethical dilemmas raised by organ transplantation or *in vitro* fertilisation; cowboy cosmetic surgeons and phlebotomists; to such socio-medical matters as alcoholism, drink-driving and the contraceptive pill — Tony T. was rarely ruffled.

He was a man of singular virtues, not least of which was the extra thought and practical help he gave in the name of friendship. On his retirement he worked hard for medical charities and for the Brendon-Cornes Homes, founded by his close friend the late Sir Ronald Gibson, of Winchester, a former chairman of council of the BMA.

FLATSHARE, SITUATIONS WANTED, MULTILINGUAL

FLIGHTS DIRECTORY, FARESAVERS, FLIGHT FRIDERS

JETLINE, ANNOUNCEMENTS

LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF MEETING, IN THE MATTER OF THE INSOLVENCY ACT 1986

DELTA WORLDWIDE, SYDNEY, PERTH, AUCKLAND, SINGAPORE, HONG KONG, TOKYO, NEW YORK, BOSTON, LOS ANGELES

Jetworld, FLIGHTWISE, FLIGHTSEEKERS

75 is no age to be leaving home, Rubka

HEALTH & FITNESS, The secret of healthy sleep rests with Adjustamatic

THE CORONATION, ON THIS DAY, September 9, 1831

THE CORONATION, The ceremonies observed at the royal coronation of their most excellent majesties King William the Fourth and Queen Adelaide, on Thursday, September 8, 1831.

ON THIS DAY, Greville wrote of William IV (1765-1837) that "his ignorance, weakness... prove him to be one of the silliest old gentlemen".

ON THIS DAY, Scaffolding were erected in front of most of the houses along the line of procession, to which spectators were admitted on paying sums varying from two guineas to a crown for each person.

ON THIS DAY, The coronation of King William IV was never a popular Sovereign, but his hold upon the affections of his subjects was never so weak as at the period of his coronation.

NEWS

BSkyB nets United for £625m

The board of Manchester United last night recommended a £625 million offer from British Sky Broadcasting after frantic negotiations during the day added nearly £40 million to the value of one of the world's most famous football clubs.

Bogus doctor jailed for five years

A bogus doctor who destroyed loving relationships by subjecting hundreds of women to worthless tests for sexually transmitted diseases was jailed for five years.

More for nurses

Nurses, midwives and health visitors who take on extra duties could add more than £1,000 a year to their salaries under a bonus scheme to be unveiled today.

Disabled row

The Government was accused of betraying the disabled and handing employers a licence to discriminate with a "piffling and pathetic" review of employment rights legislation.

Russian crisis

Russia's paralysed Government appeared to be losing its authority over vast regions of the country when local governors took unilateral steps to protect their people from the deepening economic crisis.

Peace in sight

Just one tiny splinter group is preventing Ulster from celebrating an end to 30 years of political violence.

Meningitis vaccine

An effective vaccine against the strain of meningitis commonest among university students could be ready within two years.

Patten 'no' to Hague

Chris Patten effectively ruled out serving in William Hague's Shadow Cabinet because of his policy on the European single currency.

Walking wounded

Six soldiers who set out to walk from John O'Grady's to Land's End have abandoned their long march before reaching the Scottish border.

Battle rages over a Sioux shirt

Scientists are to test a blood-stained shirt ripped from an Indian warrior during the Massacre of Wounded Knee more than a century ago to decide its resting place.



Karl Williamson and Adam Hardy hurdle round the Manchester Velodrome in a run which beat British tandem records for 5 km/h, 10 km/h and 20 km/h. But their average speed of 31 mph failed to beat the record, set in 1937, of almost 50 kilometres in an hour

BUSINESS

NetWest: The high street bank has appointed Sir David Rowland, the former chairman of Lloyd's, as its next chairman to replace Lord Alexander.

Economic optimism: Industrial production rose 0.4 per cent in July from the June level although the Office of National Statistics said the figures did not herald an upturn.

Goldman Sachs: The American bank sought to reassure its employees around the world that its flotation will go ahead.

Markets: The FTSE 100 slipped 28 points to 5344.2. Sterling's trade-weighted index fell from 103.4 to 102.9 after a fall from \$1.6685 to \$1.6570 and from DM2.8795 to DM2.8640.

SPORT

Football: Paul Merson, the England midfielder, was rebuked by Bryan Robson, his former manager, after he moved from Middlesbrough to Aston Villa for £6.75 million.

Cricket: Surrey are no longer certain to win the county championship, in which only 21 points now separate the top five teams with two matches to play.

Commonwealth Games: Fears that pollution will create havoc for competitors have been eased by electrical storms that have swept through Kuala Lumpur.

Simon Barnes: When sporting records set by figures of legend are broken, something deep within us sighs and looks the other way.

ARTS

Operatic debut: David Rendall, the English tenor sought after by the likes of Karajan, Bernstein and Barenboim, is singing his first Otello at ENO.

Fresh voices: A talented young cast holds the audience captive in British Youth Opera's production of Mozart's Così fan tutte at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Hot tickets: From Jim Carrey to Helen Mirren, from Picasso to Wagner's Ring, Times critics pick the best shows of the autumn season.

East meets West: The American director Peter Sellars became so obsessed with the 16th-century Chinese classic Peony Pavilion that he has spent years bringing it to the Western stage.

FEATURES

Branson's story: "Throughout the entire dirty-tricks episode, I have been accused of being 'naive' to believe that British Airways could behave in such a manner... I was determined to make all those who had dismissed my stance as naive eat their words."

Life shock: With big publisher's advances, Douglas Kennedy was just making it as an author when suddenly his six-year-old son was taken seriously ill.

Pram pop: Will pop-star pregnancies lead to more teenage mothers? No, say close observers of the contemporary scene.

RADIO & TV

Preview: Mel and Griff return for their 10th series. Smith and Jones (BBC1, 10.10pm). Review: Joe Joseph on a tale of strippers, racketeering and murder... Pages 42, 43

OPINION

Dead in the water

Resignation now, before the risk of an impeachment that could tip the world towards depression, looks increasingly the best option for Mr Clinton.

When Cupid dithers

If the Department of Health makes a judicious decision, Viagra could ultimately prove itself a valid financial option as well as a social boon.

Romantic Rimes

Coleridge was speaking more than metaphorically when he told a visitor: "Wordsworth strides out so far before you that he dwindles in the distance".

COLUMNS

SIMON JENKINS

Other professions that play fast and loose with public fear are subject to ethical review... Scientists can apparently terrify with impunity.

BRONWEN MADDOX

But for all the sanctimony and excess of some attacks, Democrats are right that his appeal is disintegrating, and they are right to leave him. Hillary should now do the same.

ALAN COREN

In just 475 days time, I may, for example, find myself commissioned into the 17th/21st Lancers and ordered to parachute into Iraq within the hour, horse and all. Then again, I might, by the selfsame post, be appointed Chief Executive of Thames Water.

QUESTIONS

Professor W.B. Galle, philosopher; Lal Waterson, folk singer; Sir Horace Heyman, industrialist; Tony Thistlethwaite, press officer for the British Medical Association.

LETTERS

Investigation of the President's behaviour: complexities of electoral reform; England and Empire: Data Protection Act; the Spirit Zone; table manners; millennium celebrations.

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,892

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include: Bishop travels amid confusion - who looks after the train? (10); Author of non-U book of instruction (4); Person rowing at stern of dinghy has little room to work in (8); Tawdry stuff to equip school (6); Psychiatrist's contract (6); One may expect, but not without notes (8); Alternatives at roulette one briefly generated (4); Identifies island going West without a sailor (4,6); Where invaders land around unknown point on our coast (6,4); Swindle American feller with house (4); Namely, an article that's caustic (8); It divides Irish citizens, left uncertain about English (6); In a mass written by Messiaen or Berlioz (2,4).

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,892

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include: General: overnight rain will clear away showers. Most of the country will brighten up with festing sunny spells, but it will remain changeable; London, SE England, E Anglia: windy. Heavy rain clearing. Sunny spells but sharp showers possible later. Fresh to strong S to SW winds. Max 22C (72F); Central S, E England, Midlands, Chann Is: windy, with some sunny spells and heavy showers. Fresh to strong S to SW winds. Max 22C (72F); SW, NW England, Wales, Lakes, Islls: mixture of brief sunny spells and heavy showers. Fresh to strong S to SW winds. Max 21C (70F); Central N, NE England: windy with some sun and heavy showers. Fresh S to SW winds. Max 21C (70F); Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, Central Highlands, Moray Firth, NE Scotland: rain clearing to leave sunny spells and scattered showers. Moderate to fresh S to SE winds. Max 21C (70F); SW Scotland, Glasgow, Northern Ireland: mixture of bright spells and heavy showers. Risk of thunder. Fresh S winds. Max 19C (66F); Argyll, NW Scotland, Orkney, Shetland: cloudy with showers or rain. Fresh S winds. Max 18C (64F); Republic of Ireland: sunny with showers or rain. Moderate SW winds. Max 20C (68F); Outlook: cool and blustery tomorrow and Friday. Sun and showers.

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

FILMS

The best war movie ever? Saving Private Ryan, a smash hit in America, is reviewed by Geoff Brown

BOOKS

Prophet or poet? Dante as seen in a new life by Peter Levi

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,892

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Clues include: Bishop travels amid confusion - who looks after the train? (10); Author of non-U book of instruction (4); Person rowing at stern of dinghy has little room to work in (8); Tawdry stuff to equip school (6); Psychiatrist's contract (6); One may expect, but not without notes (8); Alternatives at roulette one briefly generated (4); Identifies island going West without a sailor (4,6); Where invaders land around unknown point on our coast (6,4); Swindle American feller with house (4); Namely, an article that's caustic (8); It divides Irish citizens, left uncertain about English (6); In a mass written by Messiaen or Berlioz (2,4).

Latest Road and Weather conditions

Table with columns for region, road number, and conditions. Includes entries for M25, M25 and Link Roads, National Motorways, Continental Europe, Channel crossing, etc.

Weather by Fax

Table listing fax numbers for various regions: West Country, Wales, East Anglia, N.Wales, Scotland, etc.

World City Weather

Table listing weather conditions for 153 destinations worldwide, including London, Paris, New York, etc.

Motoring

Table listing motorway conditions by country: Europe, France, Germany, etc.

Car reports by fax

Text providing information on car reports and contact details for AA.

HOURS OF DARKNESS

Table showing sunrise and sunset times for various locations on September 13.

ABROAD

Table listing weather conditions for various international locations like Alcala, Alicante, Athens, etc.

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HIGH TIDES

Table listing high tide times for various locations like Aberdeen, Avonmouth, Belfast, etc.

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HIGHEST & LOWEST

Table listing highest and lowest temperatures for various locations like London, Manchester, etc.

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

Cats & Dogs

For anything from pet shops to dog kennels, don't ask around - ask Scoot. Call free, 24 hours a day.

SCOOT

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Large advertisement for NatWest featuring a portrait of Sir David Rowland and the text 'Rise in individual Shares' and 'Rowland named as the new NatWest chairman'.

THE TIMES

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INSIDE SECTION
2
TODAY



BUSINESS
Janet Bush says don't look for MPC visionaries
PAGE 27



ARTS
Just what makes David Rendall a cut above other tenors?
PAGES 30-32



SPORT
Kuala Lumpur prepares for Friendly Games
PAGES 38-44

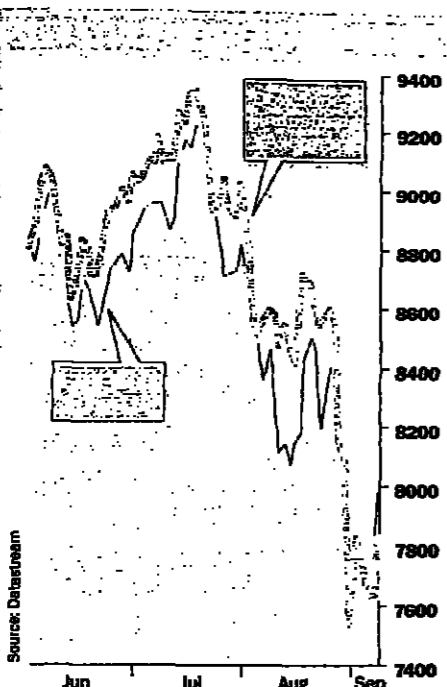
TELEVISION AND RADIO
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9 1998

Rise in industrial production puts rate cut hopes on hold Shares rally hits the buffers

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR



LONDON'S share price rally, spurred by slim hopes of an interest rate cut this week, came to an abrupt end yesterday after figures showed a surprise expansion in industrial activity. The FTSE 100 index of leading shares fell 2.8 points to 5,344.2, failing to build on Monday's 180-point surge, the second-largest in history. Against City expectations, industrial production rose 0.4 per cent in July and manufacturing output edged up 0.1 per cent. Economists had expected both measures to fall in July and yesterday's official data appears to have scuppered any hopes of a cut in UK interest rates. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, which sets the level of interest rates, begins its monthly two-day meeting today. The subdued performance in London was in contrast to other

European bourses which continued to score gains yesterday as Wall Street, closed on Monday for Labor Day, played catch-up and surged 300 points during morning trading. German shares closed with healthy gains of 3 per cent and French stocks finished nearly 3 per cent higher as investors continued to react to remarks on Friday by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, suggesting that he may be prepared to cut US rates if the world economy continues to deteriorate. On Monday, London shares had outperformed others as investors banked on lower rates in not only America, but the UK too. The sterling futures market, which had been tentatively pricing in a 0.25 percentage point cut in base rates, fell back and now expects no change. In addition,

the pound continued to weaken yesterday, which the Bank will regard as a *de facto* loosening of monetary policy. The pound closed down more than a penny at DM2.8640 compared with Monday's close of DM2.8795. The British Retail Consortium's latest snapshot of retail sales defied anecdotal evidence of a livelier performance in the high street in August. The BRC said that August sales were only 1.5 per cent up on a year ago, the same as in July, a month when high streets suffered from bad weather. Better weather in August allowed excess stocks to be sold but only at heavy discounts and, according to the BRC, concern about job security in the wake of high profile redundancy announcements had made consumers more cautious. Ann Robinson, BRC director-general, said: "Consumer confi-

dence has been declining for some time... The Bank of England should now reduce interest rates." Two new surveys show that, although confidence is dropping and fears of recession rising, business and City economists are still deeply divided on what the MPC should do on interest rates. A report yesterday by BDO Stoy Hayward and the Centre for Economics and Business Research, which compiles the results of all the leading business surveys, found that British business now believes that the economy is on the brink of recession with growth forecast to drop to 0.4 per cent by the middle of next year. Douglas McWilliams, chief executive of CEBR, said that the MPC may want to wait for another month's figures before taking action on rates, noting that, "coincidentally, this would be

around the time of the Labour Party conference." Another survey published today by the Society of Business Economists finds that one in five business economists believes that recession next year is more likely than not. However, the view on rates is mixed. Of 140 economists polled, 49 per cent favour an immediate cut in base rates with 14 per cent of those arguing that rates need to be lowered by 0.5 points or more. However, 44 per cent believe that the MPC should keep interest rates on hold this month and 7 per cent are arguing for a rise in rates. Despite disagreement on the immediate outlook, a large majority of 73 per cent believes that rates will be cut before the end of this year by between 0.25 percentage points and 0.5 percentage points.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES	
FTSE 100	5344.2 (-2.8)
Yield	3.09%
FTSE All Share	4813.49 (+6.02)
Nikkei	14813.49 (+123.43)
Dow Jones	7867.34 (+227.09)
S&P Composite	989.43 (+25.54)
US RATE	
Federal Funds	5 1/8% (unc)
Long bond	102 3/8% (unc)
Yield	5.33%
LONDON MONEY	
3-month interbank	7 1/8% (7 1/8%)
Libor long gill	112.28 (112.62)
Future (Dec)	
STERLING	
New York	1.6588* (unc)
London	
DM	1.6574 (1.6681)
\$	2.8656 (2.8762)
Sfr	3.1101 (3.1204)
Sfr	2.3472 (2.3549)
Yen	219.23 (219.78)
S index	102.9 (103.4)
DOLLAR	
London	
DM	1.7260* (unc)
FF	5.7880* (unc)
Sfr	1.4122* (unc)
Yen	132.10*
S index	110.3 (109.8)
Tokyo close Yen	131.92
NORTH SEA OIL	
Brent15-day(Nov)	\$13.30 (\$13.35)
GOLD	
London close	\$285.75 (\$287.25)

Rowland named as the new NatWest chairman

By RICHARD MILES, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

SIR DAVID ROWLAND, credited by many with bringing Lloyd's of London back from the brink of collapse, albeit at great personal cost to thousands of names, is to be the next chairman of NatWest. His appointment, which was announced yesterday, surprised the City where it was widely expected that Lord Blyth of Rowington, chairman and chief executive of Boots, the high-street retailer, would take up the mantle from Lord Alexander of Weedon when he steps down next April. Until then, Sir David will be joint deputy chairman, with Sir Sydney Lippworth, on a salary of £200,000. When he becomes chairman, this will double to £400,000, although Sir David will not qualify for the directors' incentive scheme or bonuses. Lord Alexander said that Sir David, 65, would not be an interim chairman, even though the bank requires board directors to retire at 70. "It is clearly intended that he will serve at least three years."

David oversaw the introduction of corporate investors and was accused by many names of disregarding their interests. Both Sir David and Lord Blyth joined the board as non-executive directors last April. Lord Blyth said yesterday: "I effectively ruled myself out because I could not be available until the back end of 1999, or early 2000. The last thing you want is a sort of interregnum." Since Lord Alexander became chairman nine years ago, the NatWest board has shrunk from 31 to 15 directors. Yesterday, the bank announced also that Sir Dick Evans, chairman of British Aero space, would join the board in October. Lord Hurd of Westwell, the former Conservative foreign secretary, and Sir George Quigley will leave the board in April. Although Lord Alexander, 62, is stepping down, he is unlikely to retire. He is chancellor of Exeter University and chairs a select committee in the House of Lords. Some banking analysts expressed disappointment that Lord Blyth had not been named as chairman, but said there were more important issues surrounding the issue of who would succeed Sir David.

Commentary, page 25



Named: Sir David Rowland, centre, with Lord Alexander of Weedon, NatWest's out-going chairman, left, and Derek Wanless, chief executive

P&O launches duty-paid plan

By FRASER NELSON

P&O is planning to open three large duty-paid drink, cigarettes and perfume stores in France in an attempt to defend its ferry business from the abolition of duty-free shopping due next year. The company believes that European authorities are close to replacing duty-free shops with a system where ferry companies can sell goods bought at normal overseas prices in any EU country. It plans to open retail outlets in Calais, Le Havre and Cherbourg which will sell low-cost, but duty-paid goods to passengers doing last-minute shopping before returning home. Lord Sterling of Plaistow,

chairman, said: "We'll be selling to customers coming back on board the ship. It won't totally replace everything that we lose, but we will be able to mitigate that loss." He added that the European Commission is late in confirming what will replace the duty-free system — which is due to be abolished in June next year. P&O had avoided set up any port shops before because of opposition from French authorities. But they, too, are concerned about losing custom from duty-free shopping and are giving ferry operators greater leeway to set up shop.

P&O cruises, page 24

Telewest a contender for FTSE

BRITAIN'S second-largest cable company, Telewest Communications, yesterday completed a last-minute share conversion which is almost certain to ensure its elevation into the FTSE 100 index today (Matthew Barbour writes). The loss-making company, which completed its £649 million merger with General Cable on Monday, managed to convert 469 million preference shares into ordinary shares, increasing its market value by £685 million. The move was announced hours before the 4.30pm deadline at which FTSE International decides the make-up of the index by the value of the candidates' ordinary, not preference, shares.

Rolls unveils £960m orders

By ADAM JONES

ROLLS-ROYCE, the UK aero-engine group, made its mark at the Farnborough International Air Show yesterday by announcing orders worth up to \$1.59 billion (£960 million). Rolls, as sole engine supplier to the new Airbus A340, was an automatic beneficiary of orders for the four-engine plane publicised yesterday. Emirates, the Middle East airline, confirmed that it is taking up to 16 A340-500s — as six firm orders and ten options to buy. The deal could be worth \$640 million to Rolls if Emirates takes up all the options. Rolls will also supply Trent 500 engines for up to ten A340s ordered yesterday by the Inter-

national Lease Finance Corporation. The Rolls AE 3007 engine has also been chosen for up to 150 Embraer jets ordered by American Eagle, sister company of American Airlines. Orders were taken from other airlines for ERJ-range engines. The total basic value of orders unveiled by Rolls yesterday — excluding options — is \$920 million, it said. Rolls also said it has six partners on the Trent 500 engine programme as risk- and revenue-sharers. Boeing unveiled an order from Varig, the Latin American airline, for up to 39 airliners — 737s, 767s and 777s — reportedly worth up to \$2.7 billion.

Hillsdown demerger brings bill for £50m

By ROBERT COLE CITY CORRESPONDENT

HILLSDOWN Holdings, the troubled food group, will incur restructuring charges of almost £50 million as a result of the three-way demerger and asset sale programme it is undertaking. The costs, equivalent to about 6p a share, represent another blow to hard-pressed shareholders who have seen the value of their shares dwindle over a long period. About £25 million of the costs are in professional fees with tax accounting for £20 million. The scale of the costs emerged as Hillsdown set a firm date of October 5 for the demerger of Terranova, its chilled foods segment, and for Fairview New Homes, the housebuilder. However, there was no concrete news on the series of asset sales that analysts hope will raise £750 million. The asset sales are designed to pay down about £200 million of debt, and then finance a capital redistribution. Michael Teacher, chief executive, said that the capital distribution could be undertaken in two tranches. Most of the asset sales were expected to be completed by the end of the year allowing for one distribution but disposal of the poultry side has been deferred until trading improves. Pre-tax profits for the six months to June 30 fell from £56.9 million to £52.1 million. The interim dividend is raised from 2.2p to 2.25p.

Tempus page 26

Only one airline has an exclusive lounge at Heathrow for all its UK Business Class passengers.

British Midland
The Airline for Europe

Business Class lounge also available at Edinburgh, Manchester and Dublin with openings scheduled for Glasgow and Belfast. For more information, call 045 554554 or contact your local travel agent. To ensure quality service, calls to British Midland are recorded.

Pillsbury in Heinz purchase

Pillsbury, the Diageo subsidiary, is acquiring the bakery products division of Heinz for \$178 million (about \$107.4 million), it was announced yesterday. Heinz Bakery has annual sales of \$200 million. The acquisition will add frozen unbaked bagels and frozen unbaked bread dough to Pillsbury's foodservice, frozen and dry bakery lines. Pillsbury's bakeries and foodservice business has annual sales of more than \$1 billion.

Aegis ahead

Aegis, the European advertising agency, raised first-half pre-tax profits 16 per cent to £24.4 million on sales up 9 per cent to £2 billion. Earnings rose to 1.8p from 1.6p and the half-year dividend rose from 0.30p to 0.35p.

Fitch on the up

Fitch, the brand and design consultancy, raised pre-tax profits by 9 per cent to £1.4 million in the half year to June 30 on sales up from £11.1 million to £14 million. Earnings rose from 2.53p to 2.98p and the dividend goes up from 0.28p to 0.31p.

Cadbury deal

Cadbury Schweppes has extended its £10 million-a-year sponsorship of Coronation Street until 2000. The company is investing £30 million over a three-year period in the Street.

P&O cruises forward to confound City sceptics

By FRASER NELSON

P&O said yesterday that profits from its international cruises have risen by 25 per cent, dismissing City fears that the division may be suffering from the economic downturn.

The shipping to property conglomerate, which generates a third of its profits from cruises, said that both spend per passenger and advance bookings have risen sharply on capacity that was only 2 per cent higher.

Lord Sterling of Plaistow, chairman, said the figures should confound the many City analysts who had predicted a significant fall in demand for cruises in Britain and the US.

He said: "There is no factual evidence whatsoever to suggest there is a downturn in cruising. The evidence shows quite the opposite: bookings are ahead on last year and yields are up on last year."

The cruises division made an operating profit of £90.1 million (£70.2 million) for the first six months of the year, helped by the sell-out maiden voyage of the 2,400-berth Grand Princess.

Lord Sterling added that the same strong demand is being experienced by its rival operators in the US. The City, how-

ever, was unconvinced and shares of P&O — which have fallen by 33 per cent over the past six weeks — added only 2p, to 687p. One analyst said: "They tell us that the cruises are safe because granny's income doesn't fall in a recession. But if granny's assets have gone down by 20 per cent, her perceived wealth will fall and she may cancel the cruise."

"This is the sort of thing we have to worry about, and until the outlook for the world economy is clearer we're not going to recommend the shares."

Despite a £2 million loss at its Nedlloyd container joint venture, Lord Sterling said the company is still adding capacity in its containers division and is preparing for an upturn in the market. He said: "New ships are still necessary. There is only one game in town: bigger and better value and lower costs."

Overall, group pre-tax profit was £138 million (£123 million) and earnings 16p (14.6p) per share. The interim dividend is 13.94p, with an added 0.44p compensation for a delay in payment until April next year.

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Peter Tom said Aggregates had benefited from firm trading

Aggregates gain from US roads spending

By GEORGE SVELL

THE recent 40 per cent increase in American spending on roads will underpin demand for sand, gravel rock and ready mixed concrete well into the millennium, according to Aggregate Industries, the Canis and Barton quarry and aggregates group. Peter Tom, the chief executive, said that the company's American operations, contributed £7.1 million to total operating profit of £35.1 million. Four of its five American trading regions will receive increased spending as a result of the recently authorised Transport Equity Act.

Aggregate Industries raised first half pre-tax profits by 197 per cent to £23.2 million. "The second half has started well, with an improved level of activity in the UK following a subdued second quarter."

"In the United States the main trading season is well underway and generally we anticipated a high level of activity in all regions," Mr Tom said.

"We have also benefited from firm trading conditions, synergies and the contributions from acquisitions made towards the end of 1997 and the current year."

Aggregate Industries is the fifth largest aggregates producer in Britain and the tenth biggest in the US. Sales rose 78 per cent to £367 million and earnings go up from 0.5p to 1.2p. The half-year dividend goes up from 0.80p to 0.84p.

IMI stronger as interim profits rise

IMI, the manufacturer of radiator valves and drinks dispensing equipment, still expects to increase profits this year despite a collapse in investors' confidence. Before yesterday's 14p rise to 292 1/2p, IMI's shares had almost halved since May. Gary Allen, the chief executive, said: "We are not immune to economic slowdown but we expect to make progress."

Having sold its titanium casting and alloy tubes businesses, IMI believes its profits are less vulnerable than they were during the recession in the early 1990s. Before £4.8 million of profits on disposals, IMI increased its first-half pre-tax profits by 4 per cent to £73.5 million, with £2.3 million coming from acquisitions. Its sales were 7 per cent higher at £767 million. All four divisions improved operating profits. The interim dividend was raised to 5.7p (5.4p). IMI estimates that the economic problems in Asia cost it £500,000 in lost profits — partly in lost sales of drinks equipment to Korea and Thailand. However, the drinks dispenser division increased profits by 7 per cent to £21.4 million and IMI remains confident about demand from Coca-Cola, Pepsi and McDonald's, its three main customers.

Kent car jobs created

ABOUT 230 jobs are to be created when a multinational car parts manufacturer sets up a £12 million manufacturing site in Kent. Grupo Antolin-Irausa, based in Spain, said it had chosen Kent because of its superior transport links, a pool of readily available labour, proximity to key markets, and Department of Trade and Industry financial assistance. The group manufactures automotive components in 16 countries and has an annual turnover of about £400 million. It supplies parts to most large car manufacturers.

Blue Circle cuts 250 jobs

UP TO 250 jobs will be lost with the closure of two cement plants by Blue Circle Industries. The company said sites in Plymouth and Ipswich are uncompetitive and will close next year. It hoped to relocate workers who lose their jobs. Production at some of the other eight sites has been accelerating. Keith Orrell-Jones, the chief executive, said the shutdowns will give the company lower costs, thus strengthening its UK market leadership. Last month Blue Circle spent £250 million to acquire two cement operations in Malaysia.

First Active windfalls

FIRST ACTIVE, formerly the First National Building Society, based in the Irish Republic, will be valued at between Ir£387 million (£339 million) and Ir£510 million when it floats on the Dublin and London stock exchanges on October 6. Former members will receive 450 free shares worth between Ir£1.93 and Ir£1.70. On flotation, First Active will have five years' protection from hostile bids. Unlike the terms for its British counterparts, this protection holds good even if First Active makes an acquisition in the financial services market.

Nikko acquires BCT

NIKKO EUROPE, the international arm of the Japanese Bank, has bought one of the oldest names in British car finance as a platform to expand into consumer lending. The bank is believed to have paid about £10 million for British Trust Credit, which at its peak had more than £400 million of loans on its books and 300,000 customers. Nikko said it would use the acquisition to offer personal loans to the estimated 8.7 million people who have been turned down by the high-street banks.

Pentland restructures

PENTLAND, the sports and leisurewear group, is set to embark on a £30 million reorganisation of its businesses. The company, which produces brands such as Ellesse, Mire and Kickers, is considering the sale of its US fashion footwear business, with further disposals likely. Pentland's first-half pre-tax profits rose 20 per cent to £17.4 million on turnover down 6 per cent to £253 million. The interim dividend is 1.54p (1.47p). Earnings per share were 2.82p (2.56p). The company has net cash of £136 million.

Wates expects growth

WATES City of London Properties raised half-year pre-tax profits from £2.58 million to £6.49 million. However, the figures for the six months to end June include a £3.16 million profit on a disposal. Net rental income rose 25 per cent to £3.86 million. Earnings rose from 0.92p to 2.77p and there is no half-year dividend. Paul Wates, chairman, said: "We remain confident in the group's ability to grow net assets per share through our development and investment activities in the City of London." The shares remained unchanged at 72p.

Yule Catto up by 52%

YULE CATTO, the chemicals group, raised pre-tax profits by 52 per cent to £27.4 million on sales up 42 per cent to £262 million in the six months to end June. Earnings rose 14 per cent to 13.2p out of which the dividend rises 10 per cent to 4.4p. Lord Casio, the chairman, said: "The current trading outlook is uncertain with an increasing degree of turbulence in financial markets that may undermine economic stability. However, over time our businesses have demonstrated an ability to withstand variable conditions." The shares rose 2 1/2p to 286p.

Wm Baird trade 'flat'

WILLIAM BAIRD, the clothing designer and manufacturer, raised pre-tax profits by 21 per cent to £14 million in the six months to June 30 on sales down from £38.7 million to £245 million. Earnings rose 22 per cent to 3.2p and the dividend rises by 5 per cent to 4.1p. However, Donald Parr, the chairman, said that "market conditions have remained flat across July and August and there is little sign that the trading outlook for the balance of the year is improving". Restructuring has helped it to meet the challenging trading environment.

Taywood lifted by US operations

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

TAYLOR WOODROW, the housebuilder and construction group, yesterday showed it had been rewarded for investment in the US after operations there helped lift pre-tax profits 33 per cent to £48 million in the six months to June 30.

The company's world-wide housing profits jumped 52 per cent to £25 million. Colin Parsons, chairman and chief executive, said the growth in international business provided a shield against a downturn in the UK market and that now nearly half of the group's profits were earned overseas.

In the US, housing profits quadrupled from the same period last year to £12.1 million. Taylor Woodrow has more than doubled its investment in the US over the past five years to £165 million.

Mr Parsons said that all the group's housing operations had strong order books. Taywood Homes, the company's UK division, is being managed to increase margins rather than volumes. In the first six months the average selling price of a Taywood home rose 11 per cent to £104,000. Earnings per share rose from 6.2p to 8.3p. The interim dividend, due on November 2, was lifted 20 per cent to 1.5p.

Grolsch may be swallowed

GROLSCH, one of Holland's few remaining independent brewers, is expected to fall to Interbrew, the international group that is the world's fifth-biggest brewer.

Reports say the Groen family, which holds 40 per cent of Grolsch shares, is willing to accept a bid of 70 guilders a share (£21.60) from Interbrew after rejecting an approach from it last month. Interbrew interests include Oranjeboom, one of Grolsch's main rivals.

Charter continues slide on warning

By PAUL DURMAN

SHARES in Charter, the engineering group that makes industrial fans and welding equipment, continued their steep decline yesterday when it warned investors of weak second-half trading. Dresdner Kleinwort Benson cut back its profit forecast for this year by £10 million to £84 million. Andrew Hollins, a DKB analyst, said: "It's worrying the degree to which their views have changed in recent weeks." He said Charter's welding and cutting equipment businesses looked vulnerable to economic slowdown. Charter's shares fell almost

13 per cent to 463 1/2p. Last October they traded above 860p. Its first-half pre-tax profits fell 3 per cent to £44.7 million, because of higher interest charges following its £380 million acquisition of Howden, the industrial fans company. Which profits of £6.9 million, the margins the Howden division is making on industrial fans is less than half Charter's 10 per cent target. Charter has closed plants in France, North America and Australia. The interim dividend was maintained at 9.5p a share, and is due to be paid by November 9.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank	Bank
	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	2.89	2.71
Austria Sch	23.17	19.97
Belgium Fr	62.38	57.86
Canada \$	2.645	2.487
Denmark Kr	0.8999	0.812
Egypt P	5.83	5.22
Finland Mk	12.71	11.63
France Fr	10.09	9.30
Germany DM	3.021	2.759
Greece Dr	516	471
India Ru	13.85	12.43
Indonesia Rp	1,972	1,806
Israel Sh	6.74	6.08
Italy Lit	224.20	216.87
Japan Yen	138	124
New Zealand \$	3.26	3.11
Norway Kr	13.42	12.48
Netheerds Gld	3.426	3.121
Portugal Esc	306.43	284.40
Spain Ptas	200.48	186.99
Sweden Kr	14.01	12.91
Switzerland Fr	2.501	2.283
Turkey Lira	4770.05	4397.9
USA \$	1.761	1.618

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Conversion rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Norwich Union plc Interim Statement

The Group has had an excellent year in the financial markets, which reflects sound progress in challenging markets. The Group has had an excellent year in the financial markets, which reflects sound progress in challenging markets. The Group has had an excellent year in the financial markets, which reflects sound progress in challenging markets.

	1997-98	1997-98
Gross premium income	£1,100 million	£1,050 million
Long term business	£750 million	£720 million
General business	£350 million	£330 million
Total gross premiums	£1,100 million	£1,050 million
Operating earnings	£138 million	£123 million
Balance transferred from long term business technical account	£100 million	£95 million
Balance transferred from general business technical account	£100 million	£95 million
Shareholders' investment income (net)	£100 million	£95 million
Other	£100 million	£95 million
Operating earnings before taxation	£138 million	£123 million
Realised/Unrealised investment gains	£100 million	£95 million
Profit on sales of subsidiary undertakings	£100 million	£95 million
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	£138 million	£123 million
Tax on profit on ordinary activities	£100 million	£95 million
Minority interests	£100 million	£95 million
Profit attributable to shareholders	£138 million	£123 million
Dividend	£100 million	£95 million
Retained profit for the period	£138 million	£123 million
Earnings per share	16p	14.6p
Earnings per ordinary share	16p	14.6p
Operating earnings per ordinary share	16p	14.6p
Dividend per share	13.94p	12.5p

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Advertisement for Norwich Union, featuring a large image of a person's face and the text "Norwich Union" and "Timeshares key".

Handwritten Arabic text at the bottom of the page.

Sky's the limit for Man U



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

For little more than the price of a squad of football players, BSkyB has acquired Manchester United. While £625 million represents a hefty premium over the stock market's valuation of the company, it is hardly a fortune to pay for what must be the best global brand in the sporting arena.

While the future that greeted news of the bid seemed to indicate that what was at stake was the future of a local institution, kind to children and animals, the fact is that ManU is already a hugely commercial operation. Its tendency to change its strip more often than a Follies Bergère dancer, with the sole motive of selling more outrageously over-priced shirts to doping fans, was overlooked in the outcry over what pecuniary motives might lie behind its takeover.

And ulterior motives there most certainly are. For BSkyB, buying a Premier League football club - the Premier League football club - has implications well beyond the extra cash that can be generated from selling more shirts and duvet covers emblazoned with the club logo. It is an important insurance policy for the future of BSkyB.

The televising of Premier League matches is the hook that brings in millions of Sky subscribers. Now there is the possibility that the Restrictive Practices Court will outlaw the system under which Sky acquires the

rights to televise those matches through the League rather than the individual clubs. The Office of Fair Trading suspects this arrangement has the look of a cartel, which could not be countenanced. If the court agrees, then it will be each club for itself, and potential chaos. At that stage, owning the club that people most want to watch might give Sky something of an advantage.

Since a recent survey found that 18 per cent of England's football fans are Manchester United supporters, a ready audience is assured for its matches. That will include some of the country's leading businessmen, many of whom will this morning be envying Rupert Murdoch his latest acquisition. Even Sir Richard Greenbury, the Marks & Spencer chairman who is almost one hundred per cent devoted to his business, allows himself time to watch his team in action. He is even rumoured to have a ManU shirt, worn on match days.

Predictable opposition to the deal has started about it being anti-competitive. The regulatory authorities in the UK and Europe will certainly be obliged to take a look, but given that Sky is buying but a single club, it is

hard to see where there is a real competition issue.

The fans who currently watch on Sky will continue to do so. They are unlikely to share in the hysterical opposition that has been voiced by the politicians. Apart from a few masochists, fans like their team to win and the certainty now is that more money will be pumped into the club. Greedy football stars should rejoice.

Cigarettes tipped for a comeback

The huddles of smokers gathered outside any City office building pay inelegant testimony to the hostility to the habit now rampant in the Square Mile. But tobacco is back in fashion. Shares in the newly demerged BAT rose like gentle smoke rings yesterday, puffed up by the sense that demand for the weed will continue even when

world recession hits sales of caviar and champagne. The defensive properties of tobacco are back in vogue. In Russia, the company is having to put up the prices of its cigarettes each day, but the impoverished Russians are still buying.

Investment being a fickle business, just a few weeks ago one would have expected the financial services side of the dividing BAT to be the star performer. Moods have changed but the end result is still a tribute to the thinking behind the extraordinarily complicated corporate manoeuvres that have occupied Martin Broughton and his team for many months. Yesterday's debut of the new companies proved this to be a demerger worth doing.

The shares that were valued at 57p on Friday night reappeared in their new, two quote form, with prices which, by the close equated to almost 63p.

Even given costs of around £150 million incurred in the exercise, this amounts to enhancing shareholder value. Sir Bob Reid banded that phrase around when he determinedly pressed ahead with the demerger of Selfridges from Sears, but the end result is even more depressing for Sears shareholders than the gloomiest of analysts had predicted. The omens for demerging Hillsdown are not encouraging either, and the bill for creating three companies out of one could soon look like an expensive way of achieving nothing.

But, unlike Sears, BAT did have two good businesses inside one. The strength of financial services was not questioned but the split has focused attention on the previously buried merits of the tobacco business. That looks even better now than when the hefty documentation was drawn up because, despite the latest accusations against Brown & Williamson and its lawyers, the prolonged litigation in the US is generally moving towards looking less

and corrupt institution, no matter how effectively he had done that job.

Certainly, Boots's owners became concerned that their chairman might be contemplating taking on another top job just as he had assumed the chief executive's role at Boots. At that point, Lord B was effectively obliged to rule himself out of the running for the NatWest job, if Lord Alexander were determined to leave on schedule.

So David Rowland has stepped up to take on the task. While the bank looks a lot healthier than it did six months ago, there is still restructuring to be done. Derek Wanless, the chief executive, may find that easier with a part-time chairman rather than the full-time presence that Lord Alexander has been.

Overshadowed by Blyth spirit

Sir David Rowland, already ensconced on the National Westminster board, is a perfectly respectable successor to Lord Alexander of Weedon. His appointment might have been greeted even more enthusiastically had it not been for the inelegant way in which the bank has handled the succession.

Lord Blyth of Rowington may never have been formally offered the job but it was made clear that he was the anointed one. Hints about the wisdom of having retail expertise at the helm helped to point one in that direction. It was, after all, a more positive message than indicating that it would be helpful to have a chairman who had presided over drastic restructuring of an outdated

Frozen assets

MUM no longer needs to go to Iceland; Iceland will come to her. Malcolm Walker is so convinced of the demand for home delivery that he is extending the scheme to all his stores. But even if Iceland customers are prepared to pay for the privilege of having their pizzas and frozen peas - none of them genetically modified - the investment in the operation will be heavy. He has already had to increase drastically the rates paid to drivers to stop them leaving within weeks of completing the training.

Brammer falls on warning

Shares in Brammer plunged from 487½p to 419p after the industrial services group said profits for 1998 would be "somewhat lower than in 1997". In the first half pre-tax profits fell 4.8 per cent to £13.4 million on sales down 4.9 per cent to £117.3 million.

Earnings fell 6.2 per cent to 19.6p but the half-year dividend rose 7.1 per cent to 6.0p.

Dagenham up

Dagenham Motors raised pre-tax profits by 7.4 per cent to £3.04 million on sales up 11.6 per cent to £162 million in the six months to June 30. Earnings rose 22.5 per cent to 9.8p out of which the dividend rises 10 per cent to 2.75p.

Owen advances

Shares in HR Owen, the motor dealer, rose ½p to 15p after it raised pre-tax profits by 42 per cent to £3.045 million in the six months to June 30 on sales up 6 per cent to £198 million. Earnings rose 40 per cent to 1.19p and the interim dividend rose 25 per cent to 0.5p.

Access ahead

Access Plus, the print group listed on AIM, raised pre-tax profits from £1 million to £1.57 million on sales up from £5.648 million to £9.87 million in the six months to June 30. Earnings rose from 4.84p to 6.41p and the half-year dividend rises from 1.55p to 1.95p.

Healthy profits

Holmes Place, the health club group, raised pre-tax profits by 41 per cent to £3.8 million in the six months to June 30. Sales rose 34 per cent to £16.4 million and earnings rose 15 per cent to 4.5p. A half-year dividend of 1.5p was declared.

Hay increases

Hay & Robertson raised pre-tax profits by 33 per cent to £636,000 in the six months to June 30 on sales up 10 per cent to £8.72 million. Earnings rose from 1.03p to 2.14p and a total dividend of not less than 0.5p a share was forecast against 0.3p for 1997.

Expamet builds

Expamet International, the building supplies group, raised pre-tax profits from £4.4 million to £5.8 million on sales up from £56.1 million to £61.5 million in the six months to June 30. Earnings rose from 4.63p to 6.25p and the half-year dividend rises from 1.70p to 1.95p.

Norwich Union denies repositioning rumours

By MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

LIFE and pensions business in the UK is the biggest component of Norwich Union's business, the insurer said yesterday, although the company insisted it had no plans to sell its motor, home and health insurance businesses.

Richard Harvey, group chief executive, said the general insurance operations remained "at the core of Norwich Union's growth strategy".

Mr Harvey was speaking as he unveiled half-year results at the top of forecasts for Norwich Union, which floated on the stock market last June. The results for the 26 weeks ending June 30, 1998, were set against pro forma results for the 24 weeks ending June 15, 1997.

On that basis, operating

earnings before tax rose from £288 million to £348 million while pre-tax profit, which includes substantial investment gains from a buoyant stock market and a £32 million exceptional profit from a disposal, rose from £335 million to £460 million.

Mr Harvey said shareholders' funds increased by 10 per cent in the first six months of the year and operating earnings per share rose to 17.5p compared with the interim earnings per share last year of 11.9p. He said the results did not include the volatile stock market movements of the past month, but if the FTSE fell 10 per cent, Norwich Union's pre-tax profits would be £75 million lighter.

Analysts said the general insurance results were better

than expected considering the overcapacity in the market and tough trading conditions.

Mr Harvey described as "nonsense" suggestions that Norwich Union might be repositioning itself as a pure life company.

The board has declared an interim dividend of 4.25p per share. The shares rose 24½p to 449½p yesterday. Norwich

Tempus 26

Union has been the subject of many big rumours but Mr Harvey declined to comment on recent reports that it was in talks with Halifax. He said: "I am confident of a strong, independent future for NU." He said he was seeking further efficiencies and was

developing new products in a "highly competitive" market.

World-wide life, pensions and investment operations achieved new business growth of 14 per cent in local currency terms, or 9 per cent when adjusted. This generated world-wide new business embedded-value profits of £48 million (£37 million).

On the international side - France, Ireland, Spain and Australia - the company maintained the profit increases achieved last year, although it has disposed of its New Zealand life operation.

Pre-tax life and pensions profits in the UK were £25 million (£213 million) while the UK general insurance business, which took a £13 million hit in the Easter floods, fell to £28 million from £37 million.

Scottish buys VCI for £31m

SCOTTISH Media Group has taken its first big step south of the border with the acquisition of VCI, the video, music and book publisher for £31.2 million.

Scottish, whose interests include Scottish Television and The Herald newspaper in Glasgow, is offering 80p a share, against Monday's closing price of 49½p. Michael Grade, the chairman of VCI, will not be joining the board of Scottish.

The deal came as Scottish announced record pre-tax profits before exceptional items of £23.5 million in the six months to the end of June - an increase of 27 per cent.

Earnings rose 18 per cent to 25.5p a share. The interim dividend rises 21 per cent to 8p. Scottish shares rose 32p to 65½p yesterday.

Williams turns focus on its security work

By PAUL DURMAN

WILLIAMS, the business services group, is to focus on its security systems and manned guarding businesses as it completes the integration of Chubb, bought last year for £1.3 billion.

Roger Carr, chief executive, said security systems and service - split out separately for the first time yesterday - had grown by 13 per cent in the first half, or by 19 per cent including acquisitions. He said: "This is the business that changes the growth dynamic of Williams going forward."

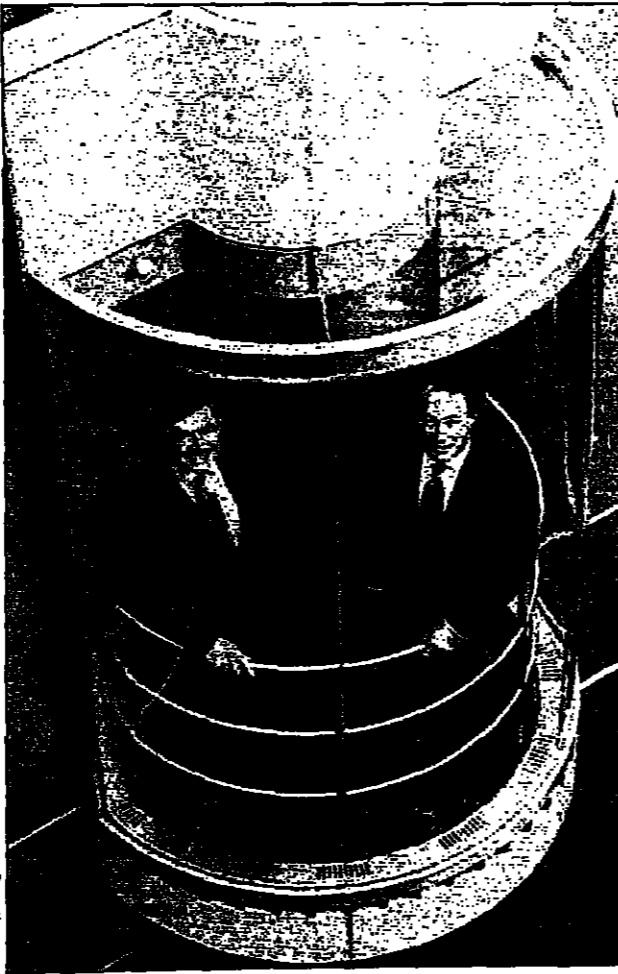
Bolstered by a full contribution from Chubb, security systems and service made a £43.4 million profit (£18.9 million) on sales of £378.5 million (£167 million).

The fire extinguishers and locks businesses are now

grouped together as security products, a bigger but slower growing division. It made profits of £92 million (£75.8 million) in the first half.

The interim results were also distorted by a £127 million profit Williams made on selling its fillers and coatings business to ICI for £350 million. As a result pre-tax profits rose from £118 million to £264 million. The interim dividend is rising to 6.25p, from 6.05p.

Williams has recently sold NuTone, its household appliances company, for \$243 million (£147 million), but it has decided against pressing ahead with the sale of its four American paints companies. Mr Carr said he did not want to let potential buyers use the current economic turbulence to try to force down the price.



Profits up: Ken Carter, right, and John Barton, chief executive

Jardine on the rise

JARDINE Lloyd Thompson, the insurance broker formed from the merger between Lloyd Thompson Group and JTB Group, said yesterday it expected to benefit from new business and extra staff as a result of consolidation in the broking sector (Marianne Curphey writes).

Ken Carter, chief executive, unveiled an increase in pre-tax profit for six months to June 30 to £30.3 million. The group declared an interim dividend of 5p per share. The shares rose 27.5p to 210p.

Mr Carter said he was building the business "as an independent company".

'Phone and deliver' at all Iceland stores

By FRASER NELSON

ICELAND is to extend its home shopping service into all its 770 stores, becoming the first retailer to offer a phone-in delivery service across the country (See Commentary, this page).

The supermarket group, which already offers a home delivery option for customers coming in to its stores, is spending £2 million on a call centre in Deeside to co-ordinate the new operation.

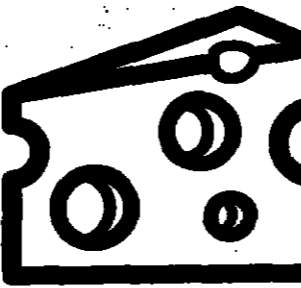
The home shopping service, which will have a £4 flat delivery charge and no minimum order, will become available from the end of next month and will be followed with an internet site.

Malcolm Walker, the chairman, said: "Sainsbury only does home shopping in 19 stores. We will be the first to do this on a nationwide basis."

He said the company already receives £3.3-million-a-week from home delivery orders, which is 11 per cent of the group's business. It was almost entirely responsible for a sharp increase in half-year profits, which rose by 32 per cent to £23.6 million on sales 17 per cent up at £334 million.

Mr Walker said the service had increased the average spend per head, and had increased customer levels by 6 per cent to 1.5 million a week.

The new enterprise will create 100 jobs in Deeside, where Iceland already runs its fridge and freezer after sales service.



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Timeshares key to BBA future

By ADAM JONES

ROBERTO QUARTA, the chief executive of BBA, played down the vulnerability of the group's aviation arm to any general economic downturn yesterday, saying sales of corporate jets would be propped up by "timeshare" agreements.

Mr Quarta was reporting interim profits of £83.7 million before tax and exceptional items, up from £80.2 million last year. Sales from continuing operations rose from £59 million to £60.3 million. Profits from the aviation division,

which mainly provides maintenance services for business jets, rose from £21.4 million to £27.3 million.

Mr Quarta said the growing trend for several companies to buy a jet jointly under a timeshare agreement would have a "dampening effect" on a downturn, allowing them to buy even when times are tight.

Although he admitted that timesharing affects only a small proportion of corporate jets, he said they are used nearly three times more intensively than normal company planes, benefiting service companies.

Mr Quarta said the non-woven materials business, which includes the manufacture of nappy linings, will benefit from greater production capacity in the second half.

He added that exposure to Latin America and Asia is small, with about 2 per cent of total group sales coming from each. BBA is exploring opportunities to expand in both regions cautiously.

Earnings per share rose from 12.4p to 13.9p. The interim dividend rises to 2.65p from 2.4p. The shares closed up 8½p to 357p.

Don't look for visionaries on MPC

Stock markets are indulging in another bout of irrational exuberance and all because Alan Greenspan, the man who so famously coined the phrase, made some highly ambiguous statements to a group of Californian academics last Friday.

The Fed Chairman acknowledged that America is not an island, immune from events in the world economy. This remark was taken by markets as sure-fire proof that the Fed is no longer inclined to tighten policy and probably has its finger on the trigger to cut rates and so save the world from depression (and banks from even larger provisions than they already face).

Although it seems indisputable that the world's most important rates in current circumstances, and will eventually cut them, it is highly debatable whether the monetary easing is imminent.

Indeed, the more stock markets rally on the hopes of easier money, the more likely it is that the Fed will stand pat. For a start, look at the level of the Dow. After an early

surge of 300 points yesterday morning, the Dow was up above 7,900 again. That is a massive advance on the 6,400 level that prevailed in October 1996 when Mr Greenspan first spoke of irrational exuberance and heading towards the 8,000 mark that prompted the Fed Chairman to launch Greenspan II last December.

Although in the febrile atmosphere of the moment, Mr Greenspan has to watch his words even more carefully than usual, the truth is that, on domestic economic grounds, he would quite like to see a further decline in stock prices, as long as it is orderly. Much as some would like the security of having the Fed act as lender of last resort to an increasingly shaky world financial system and cut rates on international grounds, its remit is about the domestic US economy.

Real domestic demand in America

is still growing at 6.5 per cent in the second quarter, much the same as in the first, and Fed-watchers insist that, however threatening he believes international events to be in the months to come, Mr Greenspan will not be tempted to cut rates until there are clear signs of a slowdown in the domestic economy.

Another argument against an early emergency cut in rates is that, courtesy of speculators rushing out of emerging markets into the relative safe haven of US assets, long-term interest rates have plunged, a *de facto* easing without the good offices of the Fed. Another source of natural easing has been the recent fall in the dollar, although nobody knows whether this will continue.

A further reason to believe that the Fed will tend to be cautious about cutting rates is the experi-

ence of the 1987 stock market crash. The Fed cut rates to help equity investors and avoid economic disaster, only to find that the economy boomed, interest rates had to be jacked up again and recession was triggered.

All of the above is just as relevant to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee meeting that begins today. Although the domestic economy is clearly slowing,

there are still surprises on the upside, notably yesterday's news of a marginal upturn in industrial production in July. In addition, the Bank is still, despite the evidence to the contrary, concerned about wage pressures and will be acutely sensitive to sterling's recent slide.

There is one big difference between the Fed and the MPC that makes it even less likely that the Bank will cut rates soon. Although the Fed's primary duty is to the domestic economy, it knows very well the importance of the level of US rates and the value of the dollar to the rest of the world economy. The Bank has no pretensions of international influence. No country pegs its value to the pound, after all. The MPC can blithely disregard even the most cataclysmic events abroad as long as they do not have a clear impact on its chances of hitting its 2.5 per cent inflation target two

years out. None of this is to deny that the contagion that started in the Far East a year ago is not serious. It merely suggests that central bankers, to whom investors are now looking for salvation, are not visionaries but economists who feel more comfortable with rules based on past experience than with instinct. The best guess must be that they will cut rates when things have got really bad for their own economies and not before.

In the absence of boldness from central bankers, perhaps we can expect some derring-do from the International Monetary Fund, so centrally involved in fire-fighting the financial crises of the past year. But no, the IMF appears to be in a chronic state of denial (and is rapidly running out of money). Faced with the meltdown of economies in the developing world and stock markets in the developed, an IMF

official said this week that the Fund would be "shading down" its world growth forecast.

Even those politicians who take the economic situation seriously (because they believe it will directly affect their electorates) are at a loss to know what to do. They would like to help the likes of Russia, because they feel threatened. On the other hand, they are not prepared to throw more money away on the problem. There is virtual paralysis, and this weekend's hastily convened Group of Seven meeting in London is not even at ministerial level. Equity investors would be well advised to sell on days when markets soar on the wings of false confidence.

The only decisiveness has come from a few emerging economies saddled with dollar-denominated debt and desperately in need of lower interest rates. By flouting the rules of the free market, Malaysia (through capital controls) and Hong Kong (through new discouragement to speculators) are already achieving lower rates without help from America. Good luck to them.



JANET BUSH

Gates and Co cast a wary eye over the European opposition

Americans are discovering that the British and their allies are coming in the latest revolution says Chris Ayres

THE Americans are getting worried. Little else could explain the arrival in London yesterday of both Bill Gates, the billionaire chairman of Microsoft, and Richard Parsons, president of Time Warner. It is rare for such heavyweights of American business to meet at the same event — in this case, *The Wall Street Journal Europe's* annual chief executives' summit — and even rarer for that event to be in London.

The sense of occasion was augmented by the appearance of some of Europe's biggest hitters, including Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive of British Telecom, and Jorma Ollila, president and chief executive of Nokia, the Finnish mobile phone manufacturer. Peter Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, will add his voice to the summit when it closes today.

Only one subject in business is racy enough to bring together such a collection of big names: the convergence of new technologies, or, in other words, the three-way marriage between the telephone, the computer and the television. The Internet was the first child of this union, with digital television set to become the second. As Mr Gates and Mr Parsons are well aware, by the time both technologies have reached maturity, the entire Western economy will have been changed for good.

Mr Gates is fond of saying that the convergence of computing, media and telecoms will create a "digital nervous system" at the heart of the economy. "A digital nervous system is an approach that modern companies will take in making sure that information moves, not only inside their companies, but also out to partners and to customers," he said yesterday. "These digital approaches are not only going to create more efficiency and get rid of paperwork, they're going to restructure a lot of industries."

If Mr Gates's predictions are correct, hundreds of millions of consumers will eventually order goods and services via their televisions or the Internet, and many people will use video conferencing to attend (at least, in spirit) their business appointments. More companies will also use intranets — closed-off parts of the Internet — to move information between internal departments, and to order goods and services from outside organisations.

"Businesses that don't up their pace of decision-making



Bill Gates addressing chief executives at the conference in London yesterday

will fall behind, no matter what industry they're in," said Mr Gates. "The Internet can be taken as a given. There can be no doubt that more and more activity will be there. We're not going to be talking about electronic commerce a few years from now. We'll talk about a few people who still use paperwork to do transactions and send invoices around, and wonder why they can't change."

Mr Gates's predictions have already been partly proved right. Everything from curs to compact discs are now sold over the Internet, and Mercedes-Benz, the German car-maker, uses video conferencing to hold meetings between its

customers and its head office. The paperless office, however, still looks like an unrealistic vision. Mr Gates also predicted that personal computers would become even more ubiquitous and that operating systems such as Windows 98 would learn to recognise users' voices.

Although Mr Gates is outwardly enthusiastic about advances in European technology, it is clear that many American companies are becoming concerned about being overtaken by their competitors on this side of the Atlantic. After all, Britain will this year become the first country to launch a terrestrial digital television service, and even the BBC — regarded as one of the most conserva-

tive media organisations — is fully embracing digital technology. This will not only bring a huge increase in the number of channels available to viewers, but will also potentially provide a mass-market medium for services such as home-shopping and video conferencing.

BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster 40 per cent owned by News International, owner of *The Times*, has already teamed up with the Midland Bank and Matsushita of Japan to form British Interactive Broadcasting, which intends to cash-in on this emerging market for interactive services. BIB's services will be accessed through BSkyB's own 200-channel digital service, to be launched next month. Many commentators believe companies such as BIB will eventually become "portals" to the Internet, thus taking away traffic (and therefore advertising revenues) from search-engine companies such as Yahoo!, which thrive on users visiting them first to find what they want on the web.

European companies have already demonstrated their ability to work together to take advantage of new technologies with the agreement several years ago of GSM, or the Global System for Mobile Communications. Thanks mainly to GSM, Europe has a booming mobile telecoms industry, which has already been exploited by Psion, the British manufacturer of palmtop computers headed by David Potter.

Psion is fighting a David and Goliath battle with Microsoft to make its Epic operating system the industry standard for all hand-held communications devices — such as mobile phones that can browse the Internet. The company has already had some success, and saw its share price more than triple in June when it formed a joint venture company with two of world's leading (and European) mobile phone companies, Ericsson and Nokia. Motorola, the American electronics giant, rushed to join the venture soon afterwards.

Given the threat of Psion and the enormous investments being made in telecoms and digital television in Britain, it is hardly surprising that Mr Gates showed up at yesterday's conference. Investments in information technology are

also likely to be boosted by the need to adapt for the European single currency.

These factors have inspired nearly every large information technology company in the US to bombard Europe with surveys and reports on "electronic commerce". James Richardson, European head of Cisco Systems, says: "European companies are looking beyond electronic commerce transactions and understand that the real winner for them is the efficiency and productivity improvements they can gain by running segments of their business over the Internet."

Mr Gates agrees. "Companies need to think about how the Internet affects their business as a whole," he said. "I think there's every reason to get involved, to get out there and be a pioneer. We're excited, we're making more investments here in Europe to really seize this opportunity."

The convergence of media, telecoms and computing technologies is being taken so seriously by BT that Sir Peter Bonfield believes European regulation should be broken down into four areas to cope. "BT proposes a model in which regulatory bodies don't try to focus on all stages in a single technology — such as TV or telecoms — but on individual stages common to all the digital technologies," he said. His four proposed regulatory areas would include the content creation, consumer equipment and distribution networks. Sir Peter went on to say that Europe was "closing the gap with North American digital markets."

BUSINESS LETTERS

Would pension reform really help the neediest?

From Mr John Pincham

Sir, Do we need a new compulsory pension scheme? We currently have an unfunded state scheme, including Serps, and funded private schemes plus social security for those whose pensions are inadequate. If pensions of those of pensionable age, and currently receiving social security, were higher, their need for social security would be less. Is a new compulsory scheme desirable and, if so, can it be achieved?

If my contributions to the state or private schemes had been higher, my pension would be greater. But if contributions by all pensioners had been higher, would the pensions they now get be proportionately or significantly more? If the State had received more in contributions in past decades, would it be better able to pay higher pensions now? I doubt it. Higher NI contributions would probably have meant lower PAYE, with borrowing unchanged. The State would not be able to pay more in pensions as a result of current national debt from past borrowing being less.

If contributions to private funded schemes had been greater, would income from investments be proportionately or materially greater? It seems to me that contributions have sustained share and bond prices, but have had little effect on

the amount of productive investment. Higher contributions would mean more money for investment and diminishing rates of return thereon.

What would be the results of significant increases in contributions to compulsory state unfunded, voluntary private funded or perhaps new compulsory funded scheme(s)? All other things being equal, there would be a fall in consumer demand and the results thereof. A rise in contributions to state unfunded would permit reductions in taxation. But the poorest (who most need more pension provision) would need more state aid to the extent that cuts in taxes they paid were less than increases in their pension contributions.

If compulsory increases were to fund scheme(s), without compensatory tax cuts, the need for increased social security payments would grow. To what extent could pension fund managers invest higher contributions to good effect?

It is mainly the poor whose pension provisions are inadequate and the poor generally lack the means to increase contributions. At least social security payments are targeted on those assessed to be in need.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN PINCHAM,
35 Lodge Close,
Stoke D'Abernon,
Surrey KT11 2SG.

Highway access

From Mr Christopher Lamb

Sir, There is no way that BT's new Highway service will be able to reach 90 per cent of the population. According to BT, it will only be available to those living within a 3km radius of a telephone exchange.

Here in Norfolk, and using its rules for connection, BT will find it difficult to reach 50 per cent of households and there will be numerous other counties in the same boat.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER LAMB,
The Red House,
Bridgham,
Norwich NR16 2RS.

No match

BAD news for Howard Hodgson, funeral director-turned-cigarette lighter maker. Hodgson and his girlfriend Christine Pickles were suing their former employers, Ronson, for more than £500,000 after being turfed out last year.

I can now reveal that they have settled the action, with Hodgson receiving £90,000 and Ms Pickles a misery £13,000. Hodgson is away on business for his new employer, Colibri, so we will have to do without his thoughts on this matter.

Parting company with directors, even for such small sums,



Howard Hodgson had to settle for less than £500,000

must be a serious drain on funds for the struggling Ronson as the company also paid Shaun Dowling, its former chairman, £30,000 to go away last year. As Ronson has since fallen out with its managing director, Richard Furse, and its deputy chief executive, Lars Rydstrom, expect no further expense to be spared.

AND now I can bring you the story of the billionaire tycoon who decided to buy a Premier League football team. George Soros — who else? — is teaming up with Nationsbank Group, according to reports from New York, to invest \$75 million in a management contract to run CR Vasco da Gama, one of the main football clubs in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazilian football is hugely successful on the field and a complete disaster off it. The top couple of dozen clubs have debts of \$500 million between them, and stadiums that can seat hundreds of thousands of people see gates of fewer than 10,000. Huge distances between cities make it difficult to put together a proper national super league, while the sport is riddled with incompetence. (Now, now. Let us not be unkind about our national



game). Soros apparently intends to target revenues from merchandising and TV rights.

ALTERNATIVELY, you could always head along to the days other opportunity to gain the benefit of various executives' opinions, the "Drivers of Change" conference held by the Chartered Institute of Marketing. The keynote speech is by Lord Marshall of Knightsbridge, who will disclose why "continuous change is vital for business success". And no doubt explain how the desire for permanent upheaval has required Lord Marshall to become chairman of so many different companies.

MARTIN WALLER

Overload

BILL GATES was in town yesterday for the annual *Wall Street Journal* chief executives summit, this year devoted to the fascinating world of convergent technology. Sycophant of the Week award goes to the unnamed American executive who welcomed Gates with the phrase: "On behalf of the human race, I thank you for everything you have done." Even more disturbingly, my informant says that most of the audience greeted this with straight faces. Either very humourless or very scared.

This morning the conference will be graced with the pres-

ence of Peter Mandelson, the Trade Secretary. (Somehow, the title still doesn't look right.) I trust the praise for the local lad made good will outstrip anything said about Gates.

is of a link with our own Premier Oil, which is also active in Cuba, and some say all will come right in the end. Alas, the links are rather tenuous. Premier tells me that in an unsuccessful attempt to find oil in Cuba the company once hired a rig from Pebercan, but that is as far as it goes.

Meanwhile, Depardieu will shortly open in a play in Paris by Jacques Attali, former head of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development until they kicked him out, based on the life of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. He was once one of the most powerful men in Europe but died in obscurity. Charles V, that is — Attali is still alive.

THE omnipresent French film actor Gérard Depardieu has made a huge fortune from the screen, and from a vineyard and a lucrative series of ads for an Italian food producer. An unspecified but considerable portion of this fortune has gone into Pebercan, a tiny oil explorer quoted on the Montreal stock exchange looking for oil off Cuba.

The actor has backed the company, run by a French businessman friend of Fidel Castro, and lost a packet. Depardieu is apparently unfazed. Talk in Paris



Gérard Depardieu has lost money he invested in oil

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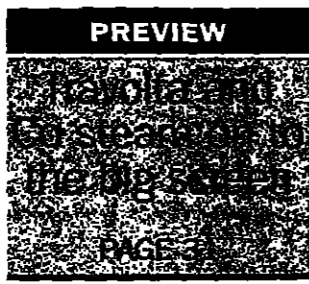
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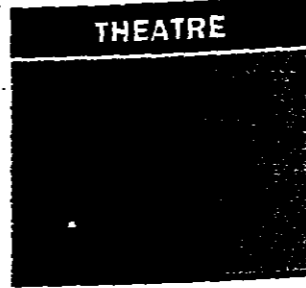
Equities lose early lead

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES						
120.00	118.00	Asahi Breweries	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Beck's Breweries	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Carlsberg	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Heineken	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Kaiser Brewery	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Miller Brewing	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Pilsener Beer	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Stout & Porter	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Wheat Beer	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Yeast & Hops	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
BANKS						
120.00	118.00	Bank of America	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Bank of New York	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Bank of Montreal	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Bank of Toronto	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Bank of West	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Bank of the West	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Bank of the South	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Bank of the Midwest	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Bank of the West	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Bank of the South	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
BREWERIES, PUBS & REST						
120.00	118.00	Anheuser-Busch	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Beck's	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Carlsberg	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Heineken	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Kaiser Brewery	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Miller Brewing	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Pilsener Beer	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Stout & Porter	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Wheat Beer	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Yeast & Hops	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS						
120.00	118.00	3M	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Amgen	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Boeing	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	General Electric	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Johnson & Johnson	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Merck	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Pfizer	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Roche	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Schering-Plough	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Schwarz	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
ELECTRICITY						
120.00	118.00	Edison International	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	PG&E	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Southern California Edison	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Western Edison	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	California Edison	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Northwest Edison	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Portland General	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Seattle City Light	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Utah Electric	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Washington State	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
ELECTRONIC & ELECT						
120.00	118.00	Intel	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Motorola	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Northern Telecom	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Qualcomm	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Sony	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Toshiba	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Verizon	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	WorldCom	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Yahoo	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Amazon	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
BUILDING MATERIALS						
120.00	118.00	Home Depot	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Lowe's	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Walmart	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Target	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Kroger	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Walgreens	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	CVS	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Wal-Mart	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Home Depot	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Lowe's	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
HOUSEHOLD GDS & TEXT						
120.00	118.00	Walmart	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Target	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Kroger	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Walgreens	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	CVS	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Wal-Mart	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Home Depot	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Lowe's	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Walmart	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Target	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
HEALTHCARE						
120.00	118.00	Amgen	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Boeing	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	General Electric	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Johnson & Johnson	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Merck	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Pfizer	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Roche	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Schering-Plough	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Schwarz	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Walmart	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
LEISURE & HOTELS						
120.00	118.00	Marriott	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Hyatt	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	InterContinental	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Radisson	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Westin	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Marriott	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Hyatt	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	InterContinental	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Radisson	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Westin	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
MINING						
120.00	118.00	Barrick	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Dee	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	Goldcorp	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
105.00	103.00	Placer Dome	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	Wheaton	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Barrick	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Dee	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	Goldcorp	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Placer Dome	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Wheaton	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
OIL & GAS						
120.00	118.00	Exxon	119.00	-0.50	-0.4%	15.2
115.00	113.00	Shell	114.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.8
110.00	108.00	BP	109.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.5
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100.00	98.00	Conoco	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Exxon	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	Shell	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	BP	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Amoco	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Conoco	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
PROPERTY						
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105.00	103.00	REITs	104.00	-0.50	-0.4%	14.2
100.00	98.00	REITs	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	REITs	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	REITs	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	REITs	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	REITs	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	REITs	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
TELECOMMUNICATIONS						
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90.00	88.00	WorldCom	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	AT&T	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
80.00	78.00	Qwest	79.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.7
75.00	73.00	Sprint	74.00	-0.50	-0.4%	12.4
TRANSPORT						
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100.00	98.00	Allegiant	99.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.9
95.00	93.00	Delta	94.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.6
90.00	88.00	American	89.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.3
85.00	83.00	United	84.00	-0.50	-0.4%	13.0
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THE TIMES ARTS



Britain's top tenor faces his Everest

OPERA: After a stunning summer David Rendall now sings Otello for the first time. He talks to Hilary Finch

If you want to track down the real fourth — or maybe fifth — tenor, go no further than London WC2 this week. The English tenor sought after by the likes of Karajan, Bernstein and Barenboim is singing his first Otello in a new production of Verdi's opera which opens at English National Opera on Friday.

Even as David Rendall was learning the role — a defining moment in any tenor's career — he was answering emergency calls throughout the summer. He stepped in for an indisposed Faust in the Berlioz epic at the First Night of the Proms; then took over *Simon Boccanegra* both at Glyndebourne and in the Albert Hall. Each last-minute performance gained standing ovations.

"You just have to keep going," he says. "If you stop you are in trouble. One day it was stage and orchestra rehearsal for *Otello* from 10.30am to 1.30pm; stage and piano from 2.30pm to 5.30pm; then *Boccanegra* at the Proms at 7pm. At least it was all Verdi."

But now Rendall is taking it easy. "Just Otello! It's a daunting thought. It's not a hurdle; it's a huge wall you have to scale, and not fall down the other side. And you know that everyone out there will be watching. The music is so glo-

riously written for the voice. That's the easy part. There are no blockbusting arias. Like there are for Iago and Desdemona. It's more a string of

'The role of Otello is not so much a hurdle for the tenor; more like a huge wall'

wonderful soliloquies. At one point everything is murmured on a single A flat, with the orchestra pulsing along underneath. There's a sense of that great soul and that heart pounding away in a vast emptiness."

The difficulties, of course, start with the psychology of the man. How does Rendall begin to get inside the mind and heart of the Moor who loved not wisely but too well? "That's the real challenge. And being black... that as well. Life experience does help. I'm glad I'm doing the role when I'm more or less Otello's own age, rather than in my thirties. On the other hand,

I've never been a slave. But then, maybe I have, in other ways: a slave to life, to my family, to my work."

For Rendall, the study of Otello's own racial awareness doesn't start and end with blacking up. He has recently discovered that his great-great grandfather married a Native Canadian. So he has North American Indian blood coursing through his veins.

Race apart, though, who is Verdi's Otello? Boito, his librettist, emphasised the importance of his appearing as a hero first, a lover second. "Yes. And he was only ever able to love one person. He's a general; he's lucid, he's disciplined, he's fair. It's not knowing, not having the answer which finally brings him down. He won't judge Desdemona until he has proof. But if he finds there is guilt, that will be the end. And as a military man, it won't bother him to kill. He will do it if necessary."

What does it feel like, having to kill? "Cold. It's just done. Only when Otello realises that he has been completely taken in, that he is the fool, only then does emotion enter and give him the courage to take his own life. Instantly."

Rendall, too, is a clear thinker. Otello, it seems, is yet another right role in the right place at the right time. The suc-



At the sharp end: David Rendall dressing for the title-role in Verdi's *Otello*, which he sings at the Coliseum on Friday

cess with which he has paced the 25 years of his career — from early Donizetti and Mozart to Wagner, with Erik and Lohengrin, and on to Loge,

maybe even Parsifal — must be the envy of most singers. Rendall seems unusually aware and in touch with his voice. "I haven't had a lot of singing lessons, but I've worked with good coaches — and, best of all, a tape recorder. Domingo always says that all the great singing teachers are dead, and that's where they should stay."

But there were mentors on

the way. Conductors, mainly — Daniel Barenboim, Eric Leinsdorf, Leonard Bernstein. "Musicians who knew and said clearly what they wanted. Leinsdorf taught me to look into words for their colour; Barenboim always saw us as just a part of the whole. He'd have no truck with unruly individual egos." And Bernstein? What did he tell Rendall? "Funny stories. We were doing the

opening concert of the Vienna Festival, and latecomers were trickling in. Everyone was tense. Bernstein leant forward to us and said: "Pssst! Two Jews are walking through Central Park. One says: 'Spring in the air!' The other says, 'Why should I?' He then raised his baton. 'Now we'll begin!'"

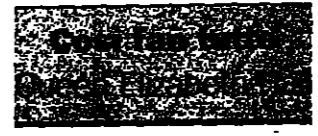
● *Otello* opens on Friday at the Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, London WC2 (0171-632 8300)

Youth into the bargain

Something extraordinary happens when, as in British Youth Opera's new production of *Così fan tutti*, a talented young cast holds a capacity audience captive. And it is even better when that audience has paid no more for its tickets than the price of going to a local cinema.

Alas, such positiveness needs to be tempered by the reality of British operatic life. Will the powers that be ensure that there are companies for these artists to sing with in the future, and if so, will the performances be affordable?

These low prices might have enabled BYO to offer more adventurous repertory in its short season (*Così* is playing in tandem with *La Bohème*). But student singers need experience of the standard works, and all six principals in the Mozart are likely to perform their roles many times again. And though producers often have difficulty finding new things to say about popular operas, after *Così* at Glyndebourne this summer anything



would have been interesting. Still, Mark Tinkler's staging of the opening scenes gives the impression of a director trying too hard. In looking for a "concept", he has set the opera in a nameless institution, evoked by the designer Annabel Lee with metallic grey walls, metal furniture and gadgets such as CCTV cameras.

The clinical setting is far removed from the music's sensuous Neapolitan atmosphere, and in Act I most of the gags seem to be imposed on the piece. But ultimately Tinkler respects the dark humour of the text itself. As the situation in Act II gets more serious, things turn very nasty: the finale, which is snarled through clenched teeth, has rarely seemed more angry.

Under its music director, Timothy Dean, BYO's standards get ever more professional. He is a conductor who really understands young singers, and even if this performance began a little too fast for the comfort of the fine orchestra, things soon settled down to a brisk but natural flow. Almost every word of Anne Ridler's translation came across.

Showing perhaps the most potential of a very even cast, Louise Innes is an excellent Dorabella. She has stage presence, and her full-toned mezzo makes the lighter sister's Act II aria a musical highlight. As Fiordiligi, Olivia Keen displays a bright soprano, secure in the treacherous *Per pietà*.

Darren Abrahams, the Ferrando, has a neat tenor, and Mark Stone's Guglielmo boasts a dark, focused baritone. Allison Cook is a deliciously cheeky Despina, and Andrew Foster does Don Alfonso a favour by singing all the notes. His portrayal may not have the hard-bitten edge more mature singers bring to the part, but it is a valid interpretation.

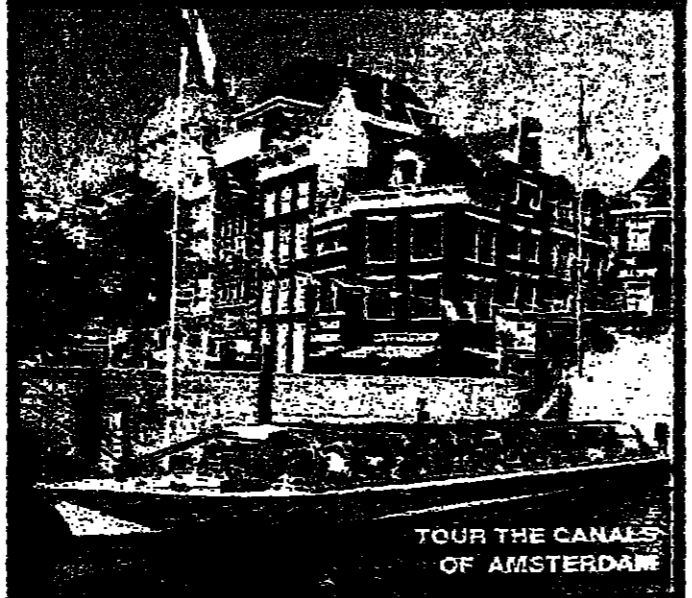
JOHN ALLISON

GREAT easyJet FLIGHTS OFFER



12 EUROPEAN CITIES FROM JUST £34 RETURN

Today *The Times* offers readers incredible savings to 12 European cities for under £60 return with easyJet. A price and destination chart will appear again tomorrow. This fantastic offer is for up to two people travelling together and you can go between October 25, 1998 and March 24, 1999, except flights to Madrid which begin on January 6. All prices are single or return fares per person and include all UK and foreign airport taxes. Full terms and conditions and exclusion dates appeared on Monday with the detailed timetable. They will be published again on September 29 or access <http://times.easyJet.com> for full details. You can book by telephone or via the Internet. A special telephone number and website password will be published on September 29. Until then, no bookings for this offer will be accepted on any other easyJet number/website. There are also great savings on car hire, travel insurance and hotels, plus a reduction of up to £11.90 with Thameslink trains to Luton airport. See full details on September 29.



TOUR THE CANALS OF AMSTERDAM

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● Collect 21, differently numbered tokens, 18 from *The Times* and three from *The Sunday Times*.
 ● 28 tokens in total will be published in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* up to October 3.
 ● Attach your tokens to the booking validation form (another will appear in Weekend on Saturday) which you will need to present when you check in for your outward journey.
 easyJet is a ticketless airline. Once your booking has been processed you will be issued with a confirmation number which is all you require, along with your booking validation form and tokens, and passport for international travel.

BOOKING OPENS SEPTEMBER 29



GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

TOM CAWLEY

Age 22. Born Derby, raised Lincoln. He's a diehard Lincoln City supporter.

Profession: Jazz pianist. He has just been named winner of this year's "Louis", otherwise known as the Royal & Sun Alliance Young Jazz Musician of the Year award.

Are his musical influences as distinctive? Yes, he's a big fan of the late Phineas Newborn, an obscure but phenomenally talented American pianist. And apart from being obsessed with John Coltrane — like every musician of his age — Cawley is a fan of Cannonball Adderley.

Not to mention Herbie Hancock: He played one of his tunes. *One Finger Snap*.

at the Young Jazz Musician of the Year final.

Has he always had his heart set on playing jazz? No. He was a Chopin and Liszt man first, at one point studying at the renowned Chetham's School in Manchester (until 13, then he dropped out).

Any working musicians, jazz or otherwise, in the family? "No, but my Dad, who's an architect, has a really good record collection with lots of Miles and Coltrane. Well, not now he hasn't — most of them are in my flat."

What else pushed him in the jazz direction? The improvising bug really took over after Cawley opted for jazz studies in his degree



course at the Royal Academy of Music. "That's where I thought I'd meet the most creative, and the most stoic, musicians."

And he enjoys pop too? Yes, but the older quality stuff: Stevie Wonder, for example.

When can we hear him next? He hopes to take his trio to Ronnie Scott's shortly as part of his "Louis" prize.

CLIVE DAVIS

MONET IN THE 20TH CENTURY: PAINTING OF THE DAY

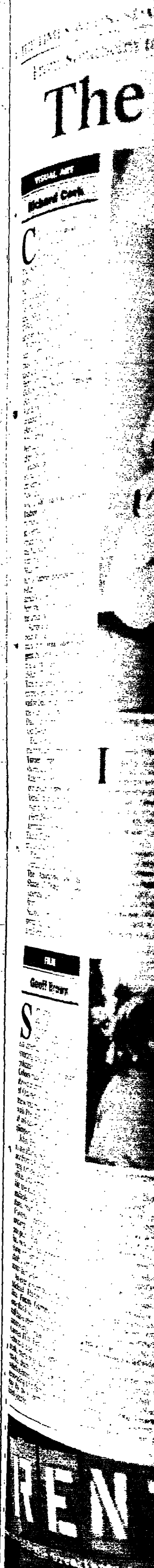
Each day this week Richard Cork selects outstanding paintings from the forthcoming Royal Academy show.

TODAY: The Grand Canal Monet's infatuation with water and sunlight was bound to attract him to Venice. He travelled there in October 1908, eager to study its changing humnity at different times. Like Monet, he was especially successful at tackling the Grand Canal. Adopting a low viewpoint he contrasts the diagonal thrust of the foreground poles with the rotundity of the dome beyond. Meanwhile, distant buildings melt in the soft Venetian light as their reflections vibrate in the burning water.

● Times readers have priority booking access to 50,000 tickets for the Royal Academy's *Monet in the 20th Century* exhibition (Jan 23 to April 19), sponsored by Ernst & Young. Telephone Firstcall (0870 842 2200, booking fee £1.80 per ticket on first five tickets, £1.40 thereafter)



MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON



From Sondheim to Stockhausen, from Stoppard to Singer Sargent: *Times* critics select the hottest tickets of the autumn season

The shows you really can't miss

VISUAL ART

Richard Corin

Can there be anything within Picasso's vast and protean body of work left unexplored? The Royal Academy clearly thinks so. Its exhibition of Picasso's ceramic work is the first sustained attempt to survey his activity as a painter and sculptor in clay (Sept 17-Dec 27). More than 200 unique pieces will be shown.

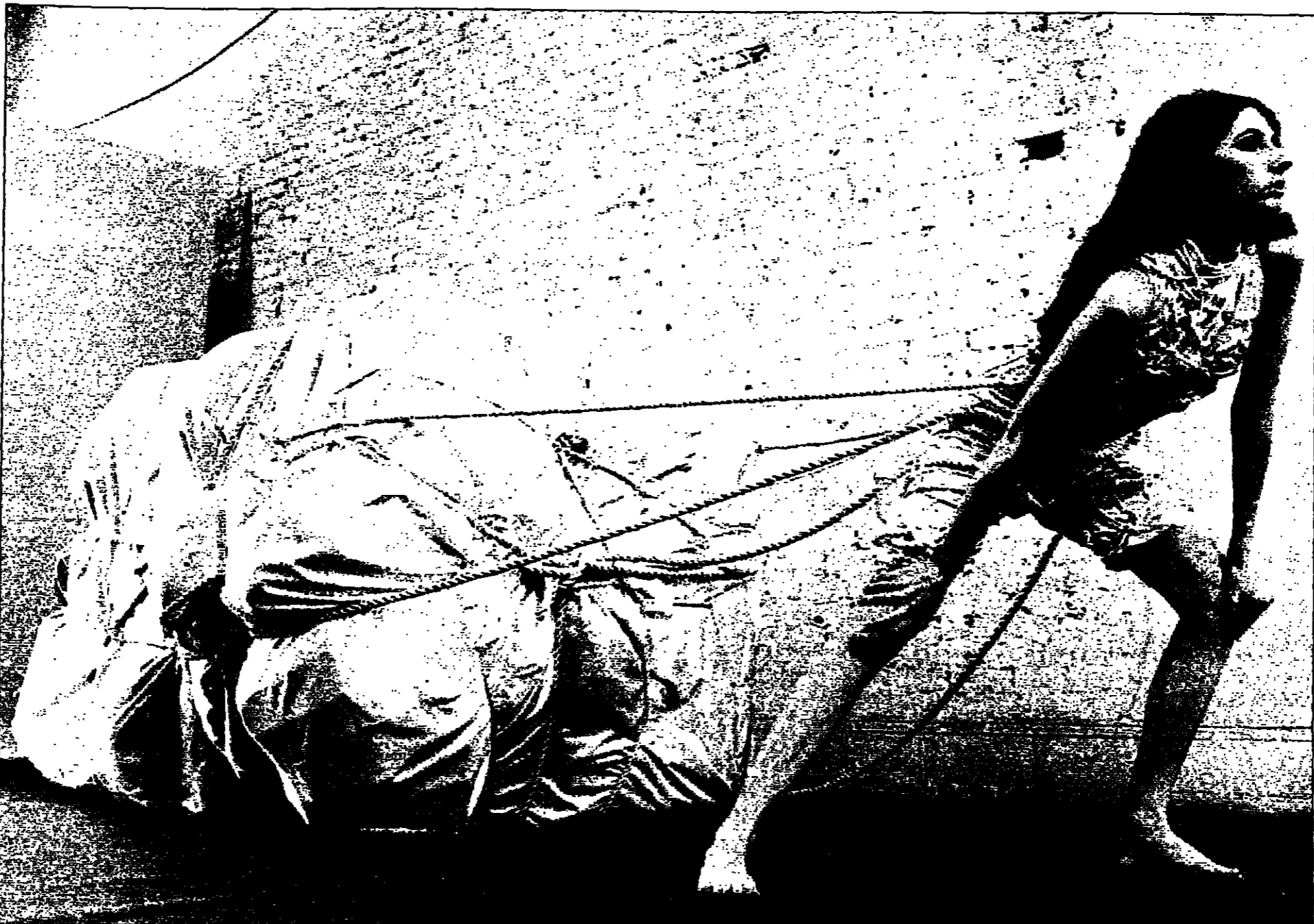
Mirrors play a powerful part in some of Picasso's paintings, but Jonathan Miller takes a far wider view of the reflected image in his National Gallery show *Mirror Image* (Sept 16-Dec 13). Ranging from Van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait to Lucian Freud's *Interior with Hand Mirror*, he reveals just how variously artists have been fascinated by the pictorial possibilities of reflection.

Fashion designers and artists have influenced each other throughout the 20th century. Now the Hayward Gallery looks at 100 Years of Art and Fashion (Oct 8-Jan 11). The story moves from Gustav Klimt in Vienna to the Russian Constructivists. With good timing, the Hayward show coincides with the Victoria and Albert Museum's centenary exhibition of Aubrey Beardsley (Oct 8-Jan 10). His elegant line and dandified personality made him one of the most fashionable artists of the 19th century.

Sumptuous clothes also appear in the stylish portraits painted by John Singer Sargent, the subject of a retrospective at the Tate Gallery (Oct 15-Jan 17). Meanwhile, the Tate in Liverpool concentrates on the work that the young Salvador Dalí produced between the wars in a show examining Dalí's use of myth and legend (Oct 24-Jan 31).

Dalí would have revelled in the brouhaha surrounding the Turner Prize, whose four shortlisted artists appear in a Tate show (Oct 28-Jan 10). One contender, Chris Ofili, will benefit from a one-man exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery (Sept 29-Nov 1), but he faces formidable competition from Tacita Dean, Cathy de Monchaux and Sam Taylor-Wood.

Finally, the British Museum sounds an alarming note in *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things To Come* (opening Dec 17). Sweeping from the 11th century to the Second World War, it will bring this year to an end with a millennial shudder.



Something borrowed: Christo's *Wedding Dress*, 1967, will be shown in *Addressing the Century: 100 Years of Art and Fashion*, the main exhibition at the Hayward Gallery this autumn

DANCE

Debra Crahan

Highlight of the autumn season will be the opening of the rebuilt Sadler's Wells Theatre. Almost £50 million went towards construction of what promises to be London's premier venue for dance. The first company into the new-look Sadler's Wells will be Rambert (Oct 12-17), who will present two mixed bills featuring, among other pieces, Paul Taylor's *Airs* and Merce Cunningham's *August Pace*, along with a new work from the director Christopher Bruce which was commissioned to celebrate the theatre's reopening. Later, Rambert returns for a week of the Lorca-inspired hit *Cruel Garden* (Nov 10-14).

Rambert is followed into the Wells by the still homeless Royal Ballet (Oct 20-Nov 7), which will present three mixed bills (including a new Ashley Page and an all-Ashton programme) along with a revival of Twyla Tharp's full-length Rossini ballet *Mr Worldly Wise*. As for foreign visitors, the Frankfurt Ballet, directed by the provocative William Forsythe, will make its long-awaited UK debut (Nov 24-28) at the Wells, performing three pieces that span a decade of his most recent work.

Outside London, Birmingham Royal Ballet launches its new season at the Hippodrome in Birmingham (Oct 1-10) with MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet*, and follows it with a mixed programme offering a world premiere from the Australian choreographer Stanton Welch. Meanwhile, English National Ballet's autumn tour kicks off in Oxford (Oct 20-24) with Michael Corde's wonderful staging of *Cinderella*, which then visits Liverpool, Southampton, Manchester and, eventually, the London Coliseum (Jan 11).

This is a big year for Dance Umbrella. Britain's premier festival of contemporary dance is celebrating its 20th birthday with nine weeks of performances (Oct 1-Nov 28) throughout London that bring together artists long associated with Umbrella. These include the British choreographers Siobhan Davies, Richard Alston, Shobana Jeyasingh, Javier De Frutos and the unpredictable Michael Clark, together with American visitors such as Merce Cunningham, Stephen Petronio and Doug Elkins.

If you missed two of the past year's most successful productions, this autumn provides a chance to catch up. Tom Stoppard's bravura play about A.E. Housman, *The Invention of Love*, reopens at the Haymarket (Nov 3) and Conor McPherson's touching, spooky *Weir* returns to the Duke of York's (Oct 12). Myself, though, I'm looking forward to spending time with three of my favourite actresses.

Helen Mirren plays opposite Alan Rickman in *Antony and Cleopatra* (National, Oct 20). Judi Dench is back, too, in Peter Hall's production of *Filumena* (Piccadilly, Oct 8). And on November 4 Diana Rigg follows the *Phaedra* she opens tonight at the

Albery with Agrippina in another of Racine's tragedies, *Britannicus*.

Both of Rigg's performances are presented by the Almeida, which also brings its touring production of Brecht's *Pantifa and His Man Matti* to its Islington headquarters (Oct 13). But it is not the only small theatre in an enterprising mood. The Donmar opens *The Blue Room*, David Hare's adaptation of Schizler's *La Route* (Sept 22), and follows it (Nov 16) with another of his Sondheim revivals: this time *Into the Woods*.

The little Cottesloe has a bright look too. Tim Supple's adaptation of Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* opens there on October 1 and Jonathan Harvey's new

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THEATRE

Richard Morrison

Guiding Star joins it on November 11. Add *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Olivier, and two new Lyricel offerings - Terry Johnson's comedy about the *Carry On* team, *Clea*, *Camping*, *Eusemielle* and *Diek*, and Trevor Nunn's revival of Pinter's *Betrayal* (Sept 21 and Nov 24 respectively) - and you have an appealing bill at the National.

Can one say as much for the RSC? Maybe. The company begins its new Stratford season (Oct 14) with the de-

vised non-Shakespearean *School for Scandal*, launches its six-month stay at the Barbican by moving the same production there on October 29, and brings Robert Lindsay to the RST in *Richard III* (Oct 28). Stratford will also see Adrian Mitchell's adaptation of C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Dec 1) and Greg Doran's production of *The Winter's Tale* (Dec 16); London, a series of transfers from the same place.

The West End is hotting up, too, with Michael Frayn's short-play collection *Alarums and Excursions* at the Gielgud (Sept 14), David Suchet as Salieri in Hall's revival of *Amadeus* at the Old Vic (Oct 21), Ned Sherrin's production of Keith Water-

house's new *Good Grief* expected the same month, and Annie and West Side Story tooting their respective ways to the Victoria Palace and the Prince Edward (Sept 30 and Oct 6).

Out of town, offerings range from musicals - *Stagias in the Rain* at Leicester's Haymarket, *South Pacific* at Sheffield's Crucible, both in December - to the fine mix at Leeds's West Yorkshire Playhouse. Not only is there a fresh attempt to breathe life into *Martin Guerre* (Dec 8) but also Steve Martin's satiric *Picasso* at the Lapsley (Sept 15) and a season headed by two fine names: Clare Higgins and Ian McKellen in Chekhov's *Seagull* (Nov 9); McKellen in Coward's *Present Laughter* (Dec 15).

FILM

Geoff Brown

Sometimes you want to tear out your hair at the time that it takes films to open in British cinemas. Americans were snorting and chortling at the political satire *Primary Colors* back in March. We in the old country have to wait until October 30, by which time the world may well be satiated with President Clinton's sexual misadventures, even when glimpsed in fictional disguise.

John Travolta is engaging as the affable, but tricky, governor from a Southern state running for the country's highest office, and Emma Thompson hits the right notes as his formidable wife. "The woman from the killer," says Travolta's redneck adviser, musing on the candidate's prospects. Real life, however, has now far outstripped anything on offer in the anonymous version of the anonymous bestseller.

An even longer delay has hit Michael Haneke's Austrian film, *Funny Games*. By the time this is unveiled (Oct 30), it will have been 18 months since controversy raged at the Cannes Film Festival over its seductive use of violence. In truth, there was always more smoke than fire in the film, which relates without frills the terrorising of a family on holiday by two seemingly well-bred youths.



Emma Thompson and John Travolta in *Primary Colors*

Another film from the 1997 shindig, Shohji Imanura's *The Palme d'Or*, slips into cinema (Nov 13). It will screen at the refurbished Curzon cinema on Shaftesbury Avenue, renamed the Curzon Soho.

Some of the attractions of this year's Cannes festival have had better luck finding a slot in the release schedule. Theo Angelopoulos, one of the few cinema poets still at work, showers us with magic in his *Palme d'Or* winner *Eternity and a Day* (Oct 16). Todd Haynes's *Velvet Goldmine*, a dizzyingly extravagant and ambitious treatment of Britain's glam rock era, enters the marketplace on October 23.

Meanwhile, what of *Jim Carrey*? In *The Truman Show* (Oct 9) he discovers that his whole life since he first drew

MUSIC

Richard Morrison

Who has the hardest act to follow this autumn? It must be Sakari Oramo, Simon Rattle's successor at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. His first concert (Birmingham, Sept 24) contains music by Sibelius to remind us that he is Finnish, Dutilleul to show us that he is young and adventurous, and Mahler to prove that he is not afraid of comparisons with his illustrious predecessor. Good luck to him.

More Mahler, in fact all of Mahler, from the Royal Philharmonic. It is presenting the symphonies and much else in the Albert Hall under Daniele Gatti, Gilbert Kaplan and others (from Sept 17).

The London Philharmonic, meanwhile, lets off its Romantic fireworks in a Rimsky-Korsakov festival (Festival Hall, Dec), while the BBC Symphony, Philharmonia and London Sinfonietta take part in a big retrospective series devoted to the late Toru Takemitsu, the Japanese master on the exquisitely sensitive wing of the avant-garde (South Bank, Oct). Those who prefer the impenetrably grandiose wing of the avant-garde will of course be queuing round the block for the London Sinfonietta's celebration of Stockhausen's 70th birthday (QEH, Oct 7). The Barbican's gargantuan

Inventing America festival - it seems to have been going on since at least 1776 - recruits Jarvis Cocker and other Britpop luminaries to pay tribute to the father of Minimalism, Terry Riley (Oct 23), in an "American Pioneers" series that also introduces big John Adams and Philip Glass works to Britain.

The Wigmore Hall has a quirkier slant on Americana. That wonderful baritone Matthias Goerne presents a centenary tribute to Hanns Eisler in the form of his sardonic *Hollywood Songbook*, compiled with Brecht in burlesque after a trip to the Land of the Free (from Oct 19).

Note too that BBC Radio 3's long-running Monday lunchtime recital series, broadcast live, transfers to the Wigmore this autumn: a coup for the hall. But all is not lost at St John's, Smith Square: the Westminster church is to host *The Grainger Event* (Nov 7-8), an appropriately eccentric celebration, lavishly cast, of music's most famous Percy.

Outside London, the BBC Scottish gives Glasgow all of Nielsen's heroic symphonies (City Hall from Oct 28) under its much admired conductor Osmo Vänskä. And the Norfolk and Norwich Festival has commissioned a big choral work, *English Songs*, from Ray Davies, whom readers of a certain vintage will recall as the skipper of that popular Sixties combo, the Kinks. You can hear his magnum opus premiered in St Andrew's Hall, Norwich (Oct 18).

OPERA

Geoff Brown

The Royal Opera leads from strength - and needs to, in its embattled state - with Bernard Haitink conducting two semi-staged Ring cycles, the first at the Albert Hall (from Sept 28) and the second at Birmingham's Symphony Hall (from Oct 5). Casts are largely familiar, but watch out for Rita Cullis's *Sieglinde* and Stig Andersen singing Siegfried for the first time here.

The company then moves to the new Sadler's Wells Theatre for what should be two merry Christmas shows: *The Bartered Bride* (Dec 10) conducted by Haitink and directed by Francesca Zambello, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Golden Cockerel* (Dec 22), conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky in Tim Hopkins's production.

English National Opera follows up David Freeman's new *Otello*, conducted by Paul Daniel and opening on Friday, with two more new productions: Donizetti's *Mary Stuart* (Oct 5), starring Ann Murray and directed by the Australian Gale Edwards; and John Tomlinson in Francesca Zambello's staging of the original (shorter) *Boris Godunov* (Nov 11). It also revisits David Pountney's terrifying "child abuse" version of *Hansel and Gretel*, for those with strong nerves (Oct 21).

The Welsh National fields



The Royal Opera's *Ring*, soon in London and Birmingham

an enticing line-up for its new *Jenifa*, opening on Saturday. Daniel Harding conducting his first opera here, Katie Mitchell directing. Its other new offering is *Hansel and Gretel* directed by Richard Jones - anything could happen - with Robson as the Witch, conducted by Vladimir Jurovsky (Dec 10). There are revivals of Joachim Herz's long-lived *Madama Butterfly* with Nuotta Focile and Paul Charles Clarke (Sept 22), and *Gloria Järvelin's thoughtful Ballo in maschera* (Oct 1).

Scottish Opera's excellent new *Dalibar* joins the Glasgow repertory (Oct 20), and it, too, is doing what is emerging as the opera of the year, *Hansel and Gretel*, in a new staging by Mark Tinkler conducted by Richard Armstrong and with Anne-Marie Owens as

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LISTINGS

Rigg as Phèdre

ARTS

THEATRE: Peter Sellars tells Rodney Milnes how he resurrected a 16th-century Chinese classic

East meets West in song

As the world gets smaller, so our experience of all manner of human artistic endeavour is broadening: multiculturalism is the order of the day. There could scarcely be anything more multicultural than Peter Sellars's production of the classical Chinese epic drama Peony Pavilion...



New interpretation: Hua Wenyi as Du Linlang in the Sellars staging of Peony Pavilion

Antics mar the melody

ALTHOUGH they rarely play live and the singer refuses interviews, Belle & Sebastian, formed in Glasgow two years ago, have gradually established themselves as the biggest cult band in Britain. Their Empire date coincided with the release of their third album, The Boy With The Arab Strap, and sold out in a day.

POP

Sure, they played cool music over the PA. But by 10.30pm the heat was unbearable and a significant percentage of the crowd was beginning to turn hostile, screaming for the band to "get on with it".

When they finally took the stage, Murdoch made the mistake of asking "What's up?", before offering a half-apology and opening with the light melody of Simple Things. However, when people continued to shout hostilities after the third song—the Velvet Underground-style old love Like Dylan In The Movies—Murdoch stropfully announced: "If you're going to be so confrontational, we're going to have to leave." Luckily, Campbell diffused the situation by momentarily taking the spotlight.

ANN SCANLON

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Marit Hargie

LONDON COSI FAN TUTTI: The hope of Britain's opera future, British Youth Opera, offers further proof of quality and commitment in its second production of this season, a fully-staged version of Mozart's light-hearted look at the respective weaknesses of the two sexes. See review, page 20. Queen Elizabeth Hall (0171-990 4222). Tonight, 7.30pm. (S)



Janáček tops a Czech bill in Birmingham

PHÈDRE: Daria Rigg heads a superb cast in Jonathan Kent's production of Racine's tragedy. New translation by Ted Hughes. Albery (0171-369 1730). Opens tonight, 7pm.

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jeremy Kingston's choice of theatre showing in London. House full, returns only. Seats at all prices. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: First production of the Shavian industry's so-called Discipline Season. Phil Witcomb directs a large cast in Rodney Ackland's version of Dostoevsky. Finborough (0171-373 3842).

FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE

Geoff Brown's choice of the latest movies. NEW RELEASES: CARESSES: Ranked Spanish film about unattractive love from idiosyncratic director Ventura Pons, adapted from a play and packed with talk. With David Selvas and Laura Conroy.

'Sellars became obsessed with Peony Pavilion'

The roots of this particular version stem from Sellars's first visit to China almost 20 years ago. Fresh out of college, he saw the Kunming Shiu Opera in Shanghai and experienced a 400-year-old tradition of musical performance. "In the West we have singers and dancers and actors, but there a singer has to be a martial artist and a dancer as well, and seeing Asian theatre in its proper setting, I could imagine what Western opera was like before Wagner turned the house lights out. The audience was there, six hours was not thought too long, you were eating, talking to friends, and every now and then something fantastically commanding would occur and you'd say: 'well, I'll have a look at that'. So I came back and started staging uncut Handel," Sellars says.

Staging two came ten years later when he met some of the performers at the Los Angeles Festival, among them "the most distinguished classical performer in China", Hua Wenyi. She had been head of the Shanghai company for ten years. Soon Hua was living in Los Angeles and when Sellars realised that this "living national treasure" was to be found in the same city, he was determined they should work together, and the ten-year preparation period began. Sellars became obsessed with Tang Xianzu's play, written in 1598 and contemporary with Romeo and Juliet, and started teaching it at UCLA. Hua joined him in workshops there and at other universities. Sorting out the text was the first hurdle. "It's in 55 scenes, and it would take a week to perform completely." (Relax, it is not being performed completely at the Barbican.) "The truth is, it doesn't all exist. Only fragments of musical material have been handed down orally. Hua Wenyi encouraged me to work on the play, saying that the tradition would die out within a genera-

Deserving a better crowd

LIVE mainstream jazz is an interactive art in which—ideally—performers and listeners encourage each other. An audience barely into double figures, such as the one at this performance by husband-and-wife team Danny Moss and Jeanie Lamb, has to be composed exclusively of intimate friends and close relations if such chemistry is to work. Given the total silence that greeted the end of Moss's first tenor solo, however, it is safe to assume that he was playing to a few strangers: even Lamb failed to distract most of the patrons from their conversations and cigar-smoking. Such experiences are, sadly, familiar enough to many jazz musicians to enable them to be philosophical about them, and Moss, now strictly speaking a visitor to the UK since his emigration to Perth in 1989, raised not so much as an eyebrow. The fact that he derives most of his artistic inspiration from the swing era greats—Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young—rather than from the bebop generation into which he was born, has led to him being compared with the so-called "young fogies"—Scott Hamilton, Harry Allen—who also eschew modernism. Like them, rather than producing relentless barrages of notes, he concentrates on tonal pur-

CHRIS PARKER

ART GALLERIES

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John Goodbody outside the Islington cottage (see story, right) which has had no takers, although 30 sets of people have viewed the property since it was put on the market in May

Staying put, for now

John Goodbody reports on the unexpected problems of selling a loved family cottage in Islington

YOU WOULD have thought that it would have been easy to sell a house in Blairite Islington. You would be wrong. The area's increasing popularity with homeowners because of its proximity to the City and West End has been something which our family has observed with surprised delight over the past 30 years. This reached a peak with the election of the new Prime Minister 16 months ago.

This year my family decided to sell the house in Northampton Grove. The two-up, two-down and two-at-the-back cottage in a quiet cul-de-sac close to Canonbury cost us £2.750 in 1968 and was one of our best property buys.

Over the years, it has been home, a source of income and a refuge for both itinerant judo fighters and also drunken journalists who have missed their last train home. The property went on the market with Holden Matthews for £160,000 on May 20. The estate agents have taken 30 sets of people to view the house, but we have not had an offer.

The house has its disadvantages. There is no garden or patio. In 1984 the house was modernised with a bathroom built in what was the backyard and the kitchen and tiny original bathroom were knocked together to make a new kitchen. The house will appeal to someone looking for a flat but who may be pleased to get a house instead.

The property needs extensive inside decoration. We had considered having the painting done but obeyed the received wisdom that people want to decorate a house to their own taste.

That it has been so difficult to sell a structurally sound and attractive cottage has surprised us. After all, the key selling feature is always location, location, location.

Holden Matthews remains upbeat, but they would, wouldn't they? David Rud-

dock, from the agents, says: "Although there are fewer people viewing properties than 18 months ago, the pricing remains buoyant and has not topped out."

However, Mr Ruddock also says that we may have to accept a lower price for Northampton Grove and that the need for work has put off potential buyers, many of whom have been City types and first-time buyers who are daunted by the need to redecorate.

We now believe we are going to have to wait until the autumn. High summer is always a poor time to sell property and the market is likely to pick up only when people return from their holidays.

Four months is not long for a house to be on the market and we are under no pressure to sell. However, in the spring we had thought that by now we would be enjoying a bidding battle for the house.

There is also a fear of déjà vu about the attempt to sell the house this time. In 1988, with the market apparently going through the roof, we tried to sell Northampton Grove. Holden Matthews then suggested £148,000 but thought we might have to settle for £145,000.

WE HARDLY had anyone round to view the property, let alone offers, and we changed agents twice without any reward. Within six months the property market had crashed across Britain, leading to the downturn in prices and the negative equity of the early Nineties. We were forced to hold on to the house.

Islington is an area particularly sensitive to market fluctuations, moving upwards and also stagnating before other parts of the UK. What could be happening today in Islington may happen elsewhere tomorrow. We may be among the first victims of a slowdown in the market.

Don't panic, it is not a crash

House prices may be slowing, and even falling, but does this signal the return of negative equity? Rachel Kelly reports

Be they cabbie or dinner party guest, estate agent or economist, the same wisdom is emanating from housing market pundits as they return from their summer holidays: the property market is slowing down and will continue to do so.

All the figures support their views. The Nationwide Building Society's house price index fell by 0.5 per cent in August, the first fall to be recorded for 20 months. The most recent figures from Black Horse Agencies say it is now taking an average of 13 weeks to sell, compared with February, when it took 11 weeks.

Only half of those surveyed by Barclays Bank now believe that their property will increase in value over the next year. Trevor Williams, a senior economist at Lloyds-TSB, says: "Recession is closer than it has been since 1992 and further increases in interest rates will have a negative impact on the housing market."

David Parry, from the Nationwide, says: "It is now clear that house price inflation peaked towards the end of 1997 and has been on a modest downward trend ever since. Activity remains weak and we do not see substantial increases over the remainder of this year."

What is less clear is whether

this is the first sign of a full-blown housing market slump. Is this the start of a return to the early Nineties or is it merely a correction to the excesses of this year and the arrival of a steadier market?

Most experts believe that homeowners are now less vulnerable than in the past because this is a market built on different foundations from that which collapsed in the early Nineties.

This is a slowing market, thanks to the six interest rate rises, from 6.25 to 7.5, in the past 14 months, a further cut in the rate of mortgage tax relief, from 15 to 10 per cent, and a general lack of economic confidence thanks to stock market falls, turmoil in Russia and the Far East, and job losses at home.

But this is not a market in freefall. Experts believe that there is no comparison with the slump earlier this decade. Prices may level off, but they will not fall by the 3 per cent a

month that the Halifax recorded in the worst of the collapse in 1992.

Milan Khatri, an economist at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, says: "There is no danger of house prices falling dramatically. House price inflation is starting to fall. Chartered Surveyors are seeing prices fall in very high-priced areas, especially in the South of England. Economic growth is starting to slow, but this is not a repeat of what we saw in the early Nineties."

Michael Coogan, the director-general of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, agrees: "It now seems quite clear that the housing market in the UK as a whole has moved away from the boom and bust scenario of previous generations — albeit that local hotspots may still occur."

Forecasters are not recasting their predictions. Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, from the National Association of Estate

Agents, says that prices will remain static for the rest of 1998. The Halifax is sticking by its prediction that prices will be 5 per cent higher by the end of the year.

In several respects, the market is very different this time round. Jim Chadwick, the marketing director at Barclays Bank, says: "Interest rates have increased but are still historically low."

People consider rates high at 8 per cent, but this does not compare to the rate rise from 9.5 per cent in June 1988 to 14 per cent in June 1989. Consumers have already adjusted to an era of lower inflation, which makes debt more risky. We are borrowing less. In the final quarter of 1988, the average UK household savings ratio was negative — people owed more money than they had. Now the ratio is high. We owe roughly £24.6 billion, compared with about £40 billion in the Eighties.

Mortgages are also smaller: the Halifax reports that few borrowers will have 90 to 100 per cent loans. We are buying when we are older and wiser. Youngsters no longer rush in to exchange, bruised by the years of repossessions and the nightmare of negative equity in the early Nineties. Yolande Barnes, of Savills, estimates that a third of homeowners now own their homes outright.

Nor have the past few years been marked by the "get rich quick" atmosphere that characterised the last boom. Indeed, prices have risen by only 27 per cent between the first quarter of 1996 and the second quarter of this year. This compares with 45 per cent from the first quarter of 1987 to the second quarter of 1989. We buy to nest, not invest, and no longer expect our houses to earn more than we do.

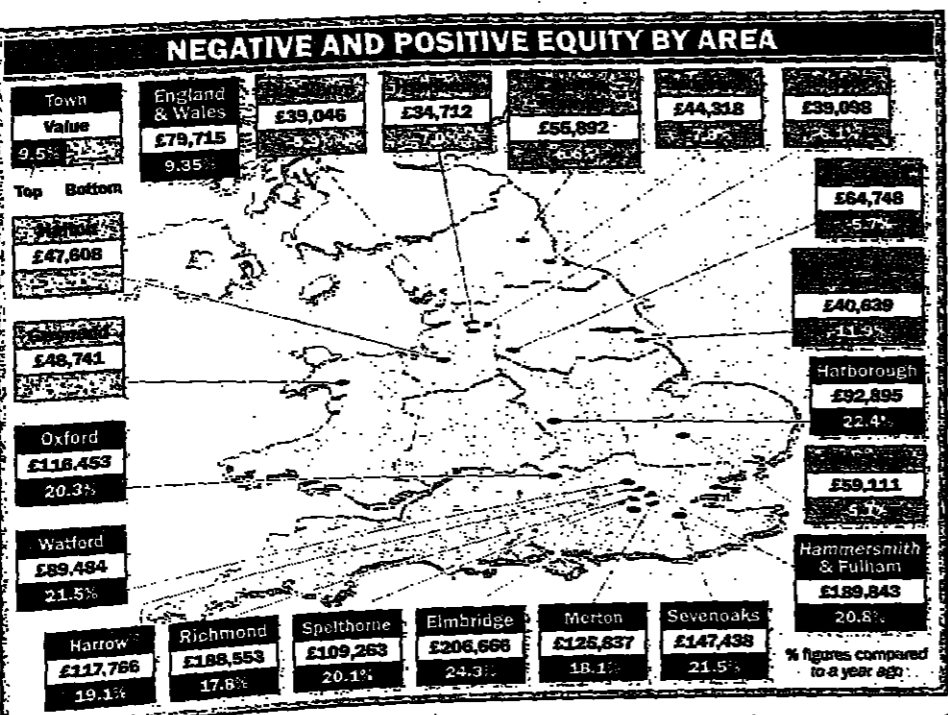
But for all that, this is a calmer market than before, this is also a tale of several markets, and some spots will be particularly vulnerable to recession, especially those hit by job redundancies.

In London, for example,

there are three times more buyers than sellers, says the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. The mismatch should mean that the market remains buoyant in pockets such as the Central London market, where Willie Gething, from Property Vision, reports that the market for large freehold houses has not waned. Leafy Elmbridge, in Surrey, reports rises of 24.3 per cent in the first quarter of 1998 compared with the first quarter of 1997.

Additional research by Ben Wakeham

Prices may level off, but they will not plunge



Sit tight or sell, sell, sell?

WHAT SHOULD consumers do? Buy, sell or sit on their hands? Ian Davis, of Black Horse Agencies, Ian Perry, from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and Christopher Legrand, of the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers, have the following advice. Ben Wakeham writes:

FOR BUYERS
1. Have a hard look at the market and do not be rushed into making hasty decisions. If you can, hold tight for 18 months.
2. Investors should stick to

quality, the experts say. The greatest demand has been for quality properties in desirable areas — in a recession they lose the least money and recover the quickest.

3. If the purchase is subject to your selling, put your house on the market first.

4. Look at your personal economic and employment prospects rather than react to those of the country.

5. Be careful to get the correct mortgage and the right mortgage advice.

6. Seek out the many medium-term fixed mortgage deals around.

7. Become a speedy mover. Give written authority to your solicitor to draw up the necessary contracts and to apply for deeds.

8. If the property you wish to buy is a leasehold, find out whether the lease is enfranchisable.

9. If you are buying a new property, make sure that you have a copy of the NHBC guarantee.

FOR SELLERS

1. Is your asking price realistic? Talk to your agent, not your neighbours.

2. Make sure that the house

is presentable. If needs be, put your clutter into storage.

3. Pre-empt the expected government guidance to speed up property sales by collecting a "for sale" pack for your house, with documents showing planning consent, building approvals, NHBC documents, guarantees, double glazing, woodwork, damp treatments, new boilers, electricity tests, service charge, and ground rent receipts.

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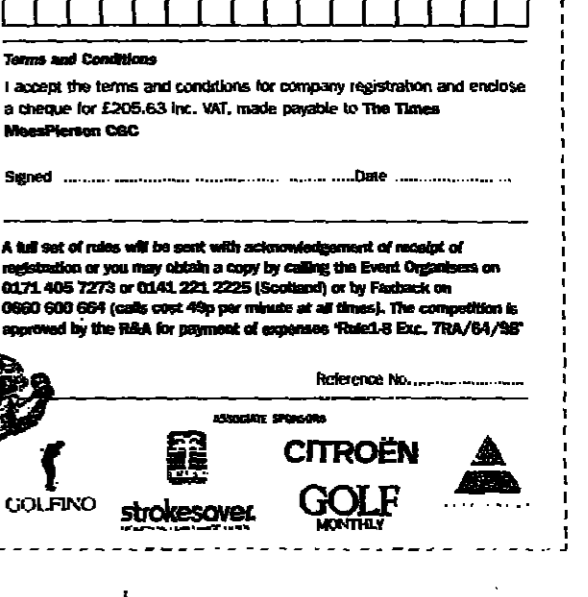
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Rob Hughes sets the scene for a sporting jamboree in Kuala Lumpur

Friendly Games offer welcome to all who play fair

THE greatest contest of the next two weeks, when 6,000 athletes from 68 countries contest the Commonwealth Games in this squalid Malaysian city, involves ourselves. We simply have to suspend our disbelief. We must come out from the clouds of atmospheric pollution, the siren voices of Malay insolvency, the suspicions that are second nature concerning drugs... and approach with open minds the efforts of human striving to achieve excellence in oppressive heat and humidity.

"Let's Make It Great", the Games posters all around this chaotic Far Eastern place beg of us. The people, on first acquaintance, will save the spirit of these games. Not just the competitors pouring into the athletes' village, competitors who include men who can wield a bat with the grace of Sachin Tendulkar, men who can crush opponents underfoot such as Jonal Lomu, swimmers who can push back the boundaries of time such as Kieren Perkins.

In those and hundreds more, these are Games that cry out to be taken seriously. In athletics, the English and other British medal winners from the European championships will know that, with the Africans to beat, the demands, the class, the standards will be higher. But a body of 356 English competitors across the 15 sporting disciplines here is not all about full-time, potential millionaire stars. They include ordinary people: Sharon Lee, a nursing assistant from Leicester, and Antony Ringer, a Norfolk gamekeeper, both competing in the rifle shooting events.

Neither of those, one presumes, will spend £1,600 on telephone bills to their loved



ones, as David Beckham reportedly did to his Spice Girl from an England camp in Georgia last year. Nor will Audley Harrison, a 17-stone Londoner with the bravery of a boxing super-heavyweight and the intelligence of a sociology graduate.

Nor James Hegney, a Birmingham refugee collector who, at the other end of boxing's scales, flyweight, has made the sacrifice of time off to train, acclimatise and now compete in the furthest-flung site since the British Empire and Commonwealth Games began in Hamilton, Canada, in 1930.

The Empire, as this very place of a former colonial presence in rubber plantations reminds us, is no more. But the Games persevere; today, the Far East, in 2002, Manchester, England. And when people call them an anachronism, when they are critical, in the modern digital world, of pushing mind and body to excessive degrees, they also sneer at the term, Friendly Games.

Well, when the Australians are here in such force of numbers, bringing the largest contingent of television crews at a cost of £11 million and aiming

for gold in the cricket and for a vast pool of 100 medals from their prowess at swimming and others, we sense this is a full-scale rehearsal for their 2,000 Olympic Games.

In a place where the heat will try those of us from colder climes, and where the back-to-back opulence and abject poverty shrieks out against reason, we see already the pleasant faces of the volunteers. They greet us at the extraordinary new, cool, expansive airport. They step forward out of their natural reserve to see what our needs are. This, we know, will be nothing like Atlanta where the Olympic Games were not only a torture chamber of heat and altitude, but also lacking friendliness or humility.

Perhaps one could observe that this is Vimto to Coca-Cola. For while the former is the main sponsor to England's aspirants in Kuala Lumpur, the latter was very much the reason the Olympics were sold to soulless Atlanta.

Of course, there are problems. The rains have come in the afternoons, and even the splendid 100,000-seat stadium, where the King of Malaysia will open the Games on Friday, and where Queen Elizabeth is scheduled to close them on September 21, has leaked under the tropical downpours.

That these are separate and special Games was evidenced yesterday when Arthur Tunstall, that crude Australian who at the last Commonwealth Games in Victoria said that disabled athletes had no right sharing the fun with the full-bodied elite, and also deplored Kathy Freeman carrying the Aborigine flag, was voted off the committee. Apparently, the deciding vote was from New Zealand, who preferred someone from the Cooke Islands.

Here, where the haze from Indonesian forest fires is apparent but not on a par with the daily Hollywood pall, where the ringgit has dropped 40 per cent as a consequence of the depression in the Asian economy, and where the political fallout between those seeking the power of rule, the sixteenth Commonwealth Games will, for better or worse, represent the largest public event in Malay history.

Malaysia Bole — "Malaysia Can" — is the local slogan. If the Commonwealth Games is to endure, and if the boldness in opening it up to a troubled, emerging part of Britain's colonial past is to succeed, we need, all of us here, to believe that sport still has a binding role beyond the adulation of bank-account glory.

We do not need repercussions for drug abuse. Before embarking, three Britons — the weightlifters, Paul Supple, of England, and Andrew Goswell, of Wales, and the English sprint cyclist, Gary Edwards, were prevented from coming because they failed dope tests. If there are bigger dopes here, unable to shake the addiction that is unadulterated cheating, Malaysia has a forbidding message.

It comes at every port of entry, before every plane touches down. "The trafficking of illicit drugs into Malaysia," the pilot warns, "is a very serious offence which carries a mandatory death sentence. Thank you."



A technician checks an underwater television cable in the Bukit Jalil aquatic centre pool while swimmers practise above

Smog fears are eased by storms

FROM CRAIG LORD

THE ferocious electrical storms that have swept through Kuala Lumpur every afternoon for the past week are set to continue throughout much of September, according to official forecasts, easing fears that pollution will hinder competitors.

The tropical downpours that have fallen for an hour every afternoon have brought relief from humidity and heat, and provided a breath of fresh air in the Bukit Jalil district which sits on a hill overlooking the city that is home to the athletics and aquatics centres and several other venues for the Games.

Mark Foster, an asthmatic, who will defend his 50 metres freestyle title for England next week, said: "It's brilliant having the storm every day. It really clears the air. I've had no trouble here at the pool and around the Games village. I was in the city yesterday, though, and it's pretty bad down there. There's so much traffic it's difficult to catch your breath."

Karen Pickering, Foster's team-mate, also an asthmatic, will defend her 100 metres freestyle title here. Dave Champion, her coach, said: "Karen has had no trouble so we're hoping the storms will last. We were worried after warnings that it would be like a curtain of smog out here. But the rain seems to be washing it away just in time."

Santhira Segaran, duty meteorologist with the Malaysian Meteorological Service, said: "We're expecting the storms to last. The pattern may be three days of storms then one of change where the weather turns either showery or sunny and fine. If the fine weather lasts more than three days then the haze returns and there are problems. But we're expecting patterns of two or three days of storms and one of change."

The marathon runners and road race cyclists are among those who might yet suffer from the pollution, which is a lingering product of the fires that have ravaged Indonesia in the past year. Intensely heavy traffic also makes Kuala Lumpur city centre a suffocating place.

Scotland aim to make impression

BY KEVIN EASON

MINNOWS mix with the sharks of world cricket today as the sport makes its debut at the Commonwealth Games. While most of the teams were last night wondering whether they could complete their opening games in the stormy conditions affecting the eight grounds chosen around Kuala Lumpur, Jim Love, the Scotland coach, was contemplating a first match for his team against Pakistan.

Though the Pakistanis have arrived under strength, they remain among the favourites for medals in a remarkably unbalanced competition. Australia are promising what amounts to a Test side, though they are without the injured Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne.

Scotland will have to come through the match today plus a stiff examination against New Zealand to progress, though Love wishes the competition had been tougher, with an England side taking part.

England pleaded Test commitments for not sending a team, but Love said yesterday: "We will have our work cut out, but we're not here to be a minor irritation to anyone. We know we're not a main sport in Scotland, compared to football and rugby, but our recent results have helped nurture more interest and this and the World Cup can focus that support. It was their decision but it would have been nice to see England here and I'm disappointed they're not."

Northern Ireland at least hope to profit from England's



Australia must manage without McGrath, left, and Warne

Viv Richards, and include Richie Richardson and Curtly Ambrose. "We hear Australia and India are the gold medal favourites, but they have to beat us first," Richards said.

The question yesterday, though, was whether anyone would get to play, as Kuala Lumpur was engulfed in a tropical downpour, forcing Sachin Tendulkar, the India batsman, to practice with a tennis ball under the overhanging pavilion roof of the TNB Sports Club.

His side face Antigua in the first round, a problem that was clearly exercising Indian minds before the game today. "Forget the Australians, we need to get over Antigua first," Krish Srikkanth, the India coach, said. "This is certainly not going to be a picnic."

The 16 teams are split into four groups of four with the group winners progressing to knockout semi-finals.

GROUP A: Sri Lanka, Barbados, Jamaica, Malaysia. GROUP B: India, Australia, Canada, Antigua. GROUP C: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Northern Ireland. GROUP D: Pakistan, New Zealand, Kenya, Scotland.

SCHEDULE: Sep 16: group A winner v group C winner. Sep 17: group B winner v group D winner. Sep 18: final.

Morgan out to bank gold

FROM RICHARD EATON

KELLY MORGAN must be one of the most improbable favourites for a gold medal there has been. Once so short of funds that she had to base herself in France and Denmark to keep her badminton career going, the 23-year-old from Cardiff is still without a proper racket contract despite having just become the first British singles player to reach the top tier.

"She's done very well to keep going at all on the money she had before this year," Chris Rees, her coach, said. Reaching the final of the European championships in Sofia in April helped to boost both Morgan's bank balance and her confidence. With just a little less diffidence than she showed in Bulgaria, Morgan could claim the title in Malaysia with ease.

The only slight reservation is the quality of the Chinese

Souyave pitched into controversy

FROM CATHY HARRIS

MAGGIE SOUYAVE, the England coach, displayed admirable diplomatic skills when she deflected comments describing the women as second-class citizens on the eve of the inaugural hockey tournament yesterday.

Confined to a smaller venue a considerable distance from the impressive men's national stadium, there has also been strong criticism of the quality of the pitch.

Souyave admitted there could be problems at penalty corners and shooting at goal because of an uneven bounce in one of the circles, before tactfully adding: "It's not ideal."

She also fears that the women's event will suffer from a lack of media attention: "At the World Cup in Holland in May, men and women received equal coverage. There is a distinct difference here and the facilities are far better for the men," she said.

Ric Charlesworth, coach of Australia, the world and Olympic champions and favourites to capture the gold medal, has been lobbying for the semi-finals and finals to be moved to the national stadium. Before England consider appealing for any changes, however, they must finish in the top two of their group to qualify for the medal play-offs.

After finishing a dismal ninth in Utrecht, England have been drawn against New Zealand today and South Africa on Saturday. Failure against either team, both crush in the rankings, could crush England's hopes of making the last four and effectively settle the futures of the management and players.

"There's no hiding," said Sue Sutton, the team manager. "Finishing out of the medals is totally unacceptable."

Pool A: Australia, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Scotland, Trinidad and Tobago. Pool B: Canada, England, New Zealand, Namibia, South Africa, Wales.

Crutchley in scoring mood

BOB CRUTCHLEY, who proved his fitness by scoring twice in a 3-0 victory over New Zealand here, is in the England men's hockey side for the pool B match with Canada today. Danny Hall, a standby forward, returned home last night.

Crutchley is one of four new players in an England team shaken up after finishing sixth in the World Cup in Holland. The other three are Fortham, Head and the deep defender, Johnson, who is only 18.

David Whittle, the team manager, said yesterday that the England players were optimistic but knew Canada would be hard to beat, even though England got the better of them by 2-1 in the World Cup. Canada have been forced into changes because of a crop of injuries, the latest to drop out being the inside forward Marek Gacek, who gives way to Ranjiv Deol, a member of the Reading team last season.

England can expect tough opposition from the host na-

ROWING

Haining breezes past his rivals

FROM MIKE ROSEWELL IN COLOGNE

IN THEIR long and successful careers, both in the pairs and the fours, Steve Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent have always followed the philosophy that preliminary races should be won. Even if the top two or three crews in a race are due to qualify, Britain's stars would go for first. Redgrave was not racing in the world championships here yesterday but his example was followed as six of the seven British crews finished first in their repechages to gain progress to semi-finals and finals.

Britain's three scullers started the winning trend as Peter Haining, Greg Searle and Guin Batten spearheaded their repechage heats. Conditions were difficult, not to the dismay of the veteran Haining against more youthful opponents. "The head wind played havoc with the younger lads. I played around with them a bit," he said.

Searle, drawn in the easiest heat, had an even easier passage to the semi-final tomorrow. He left his four opponents for dead from the start, and had little to do from the 400 metre mark. "I am not used to winning after a minute," he said. In the women's sculls, Batten was led to 500 metres by Celine Garcia, of France, her conqueror in the past, but by half-way Batten had the initiative and went on to win with ease.

The lightweight eight made a point to their closest rivals, Italy, by winning by a third of a length. They are still not at their best, however, and Len Robertson, the coach, has three days before the final on Saturday to hone his crew.

Simon Goodbrand and Colin Greenaway, in the double sculls, looked smoother than earlier in the season and did their confidence no harm by beating the Free brothers, of Australia, the 1997 world bronze medalists. Steve Williams and Fred Scarlett, in the coxless pairs, also did well to hold off another leading Australian crew, Mike McKay and Drew Ginn.

Dot Blackie and Cath Bishop qualified for the final of the women's coxless pairs on Saturday, but they were edged out of first place by the 1997 Russian world bronze medal winners. "Our row was solid, but nothing extra," said Blackie, after qualifying for her first world final.

Results, page 41

CYCLING

Guidi has edge over Jalabert

FABRIZIO GUIDI, of Italy, won the fourth leg of the Tour of Spain — and the front-runner's yellow jersey — yesterday as the overall lead changed hands for the second time in as many days.

Guidi, riding for the Polti team, covered the 173.5-kilometre [108-mile] stretch between Malaga and Granada in 4hr 27min 25sec. His efforts enabled him to replace Laurent Jalabert, of France, a member of the ONCE-Deutsche Bank team, as overall leader of the three-week marathon.

Jalabert may not play second fiddle for long, however. He has emerged as the man to beat Jalabert, now second in the standings, insisted that he did not mind giving up the lead.

"It means less stress for me," he said. "I'm happy to let someone else have the pressure of being overall leader for a while." Markus Szberg, a Swiss rider with Post Swiss, is third.

Second place in the day's leg went to Giovanni Lombardi, from Italy, of Telekom, with Jeroen Blijlevens, from Holland, of TVM, in third place. They were both credited with the same time as Guidi. As was the case on Monday, the fourth leg saw a number of breakaway attempts, again by Spanish riders.

Vicente Garcia Acosta, of Banesto, jumped out in the 110th kilometre and rode alone to the outskirts of Granada until the pack caught up. Guidi won the leg with a determined sprint across the finish line. The fifth leg today covers 165.5 kilometres [103 miles] between Otula del Rio and Murcia.

Results, page 41

Savill leads against... of financial...

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FOOTBALL

Pleat keen to prove his point in role of caretaker

BY MATT DICKINSON

DAVID PLEAT has been told that he will not succeed Christian Gross as manager of Tottenham Hotspur...

er than on the training ground and that has given Alan Sugar, the Spurs chairman, breathing space to find a new coach...

Meanwhile, Arsene Wenger has distanced himself from suggestions that he could succeed Glenn Hoddle as England coach...



Pleat taking charge



A grim-faced Bryan Robson, the manager, prepares to give vent to his anger at Paul Merson's move from Middlesbrough to Aston Villa at a news conference at the Riverside Stadium yesterday. Report, page 44

Gullit asks for time to reshape Newcastle squad

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

RUUD GULLIT tonight begins in earnest the task of rejuvenating Newcastle United...

Gullit watched from the stand at St James' Park as Liverpool scored four goals in the first half...

"It's always difficult to organise things so quickly," he said. "I will take it one step at a time and try to introduce things to the players gradually..."

"It's a nice environment and everyone is enthusiastic. What shape the team takes will be decided over the coming weeks..."

"It will be interesting for them and interesting for us to see how we handle Merson if he plays," Gullit said.

Dietmar Hamann, the Germany midfielder player, and Steve Howey, the defender, are definitely out injured while there are also doubts over and

Ferguson to keep eye on the ball

BY STEPHEN WOOD

MANCHESTER United will attempt to reclaim its identity as a football club tonight. Amid the 'brouhaha' of BSKYB's expected multi-million-pound takeover bid...

They have a simple reason to be United, the most successful team in England in the 1990s...

The players who have the privilege of pulling on the famous United shirt can also

let their actions do the talking once again. Rumours abound about possible 'dream teams' being put together at Old Trafford following any successful takeover bid...

Ferguson knows that more than most and, yet, it will be a tricky evening for him. Understanding the inevitability of change on the one hand, he will note the supporters' pre-match protests about the sale...

"I know as much as the next man and I just hope that whatever happens is good for the club and the supporters," he said. "We are determined not to let it affect daily life here..."

United have not played for two weeks because of the vagaries of the fixture computer and internationals. The break has been useful in affording Gary Neville and David Beckham holidays and Neville, who was expected to be out for a month with a hamstring injury...

Yorke: home debut which leaves Ferguson to decide on who plays alongside him up front. Paul Scholes could get the nod over Andy Cole.

Smith hopes Wednesday bear brunt of new resolve

BY BILL EDGAR

DERBY County supporters accustomed to the attacking feats of last season have found little more than crumbs this time round. They have borne the brunt of the general low-key start to the FA Carling Premiership season...

Wilson has named an unchanged side for the first three Premiership games and the question remains if he will alter his side after the 1-0

home defeat by Aston Villa. Wednesday are twelfth in the fledgling table, one place ahead of Derby.

Wilson has named an unchanged side for the first three Premiership games and the question remains if he will alter his side after the 1-0

Carbone ran to the touchline and demanded to be substituted after he was involved in a pushing and shouting contest with David Hirst, his teammate. The third goal in the return fixture angered Di Canio so much that he was taken off by Ron Atkinson, then the Wednesday manager...

The outspoken duo have caused unrest against this season. Carbone suggesting he might want to return to Italy and Di Canio claiming the team is not good enough.

Wilson has named an unchanged side for the first three Premiership games and the question remains if he will alter his side after the 1-0

McMahon leaves future in doubt

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

STEVE MCMAHON, the Swindon Town manager, warned his players he could resign before the derby with Oxford United at the County Ground tonight.

McMahon spent yesterday pondering his future in the wake of eight enforced redundancies at the club, including three senior members of coaching staff.

Mike Walsh, the coach, took training while Mark Walters led a fight by players to persuade the former Liverpool and England midfielder player to stay at the club.

Senior players also persuaded McMahon not to quit during a torrid end-of-season run of results last term as he became increasingly frustrated at a lack of resources.

Troubled Swindon have estimated debts of around £4 million and Rikki Hunt, the chairman, made eight members of staff redundant to save £500,000-per-year.

friend, and Tommy Wheeldon, the youth co-ordinator, were all dismissed on Monday along with four office staff.

Swindon need crowds of 13,500 to break even, but only attracted an attendance of 8,537 for the West Country derby with Bristol City on Saturday in which the club recorded its first league win of the season.

Meanwhile, Sheffield United have completed the signing of Andy Goram, the former Rangers and Scotland goalkeeper, on a two-month contract. Goram, 40, could even feature in the Nationwide League first division match against Grimsby Town after Simon Tracey damaged a shoulder in the defeat at Huddersfield Town on Saturday.

Nicky Rust, the goalkeeper who let in nine goals on his debut for Barnet at the weekend, has been rewarded by John Still, the manager, with a permanent contract at the third division club.

FOR THE RECORD

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

NATIONAL LEAGUE (NFL): Denver 27 New England 21

BASEBALL

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Toronto 15 Cleveland 7; Texas 6 Minnesota 12 Boston 4 New York Yankees 3 Chicago White Sox 7 Detroit 5 Seattle 11 Baltimore 1

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Milwaukee 6 Pittsburgh 3; New York Mets 8 Atlanta 7; St Louis 10 Houston 10 Cincinnati 7 Arizona 4 Los Angeles 2 San Francisco 5 San Diego 4

BOWLS

CLEVELAND: (Women) All England Bowls Club (England) and G. Richardson (Australia) 21-18; P. Gurney (England) 21-16; P. Gurney (England) 21-16; P. Gurney (England) 21-16

CYCLING

TOUR OF SPAIN: Fourth stage (Malaga to Grenada, 179.5km), 1. F. Gaudin (Fr) 27min 22sec; 2. G. Lombardi (It); 3. J. S. B. (Fr); 4. M. W. (Bel); 5. A. E. (Bel); 6. A. B. (Bel) (Fr) all at same time. Overall positions: 1. G. (Fr) 2. S. (Fr) 3. L. (Fr) 4. J. (Fr) 5. M. (Fr) 6. D. (Fr) 7. P. (Fr) 8. G. (Fr) 9. F. (Fr) 10. G. (Fr) 11. M. (Fr) 12. S. (Fr) 13. G. (Fr) 14. M. (Fr) 15. P. (Fr) 16. M. (Fr) 17. S. (Fr) 18. G. (Fr) 19. F. (Fr) 20. G. (Fr) 21. M. (Fr) 22. S. (Fr) 23. G. (Fr) 24. M. (Fr) 25. P. (Fr) 26. M. (Fr) 27. S. (Fr) 28. G. (Fr) 29. F. (Fr) 30. G. (Fr) 31. M. (Fr) 32. S. (Fr) 33. G. (Fr) 34. M. (Fr) 35. P. (Fr) 36. M. (Fr) 37. S. (Fr) 38. G. (Fr) 39. F. (Fr) 40. G. (Fr) 41. M. (Fr) 42. S. (Fr) 43. G. (Fr) 44. M. (Fr) 45. P. (Fr) 46. M. (Fr) 47. S. (Fr) 48. G. (Fr) 49. F. (Fr) 50. G. (Fr) 51. M. (Fr) 52. S. (Fr) 53. G. (Fr) 54. M. (Fr) 55. P. (Fr) 56. M. (Fr) 57. S. (Fr) 58. G. (Fr) 59. F. (Fr) 60. G. (Fr) 61. M. (Fr) 62. S. (Fr) 63. G. (Fr) 64. M. (Fr) 65. P. (Fr) 66. M. 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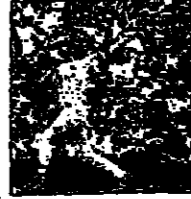


CRICKET 40
Mullally's fitness proves worry for Leicestershire

SPORT

BASEBALL 42

McGwire's feats provoke outbreak of record mania



WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9 1998

History supports United takeover

MANCHESTER United, the club that was founded 120 years ago when the dining committee of a railway company embraced England's twin sporting passions of football and cricket by forming Newton Heath for its workers, last night completed the latest stage of its evolution when its directors accepted the £625 million takeover bid from BSKyB.

For all the dismay that has surrounded the passing of England's best-supported football team from the Edwards family into the grip of a satellite television company, it is more than likely that these United supporters who are thought to be organising a protest against the sale before the home game against Charlton Athletic tonight will have cause for second thoughts.

bitterness that has accompanied the news of the takeover, some United fans seem to have forgotten another the well established traditions at Old Trafford: criticising the club's owners. Supporters have made their feelings felt before, launching protracted campaigns against Martin Edwards, the chief executive, over seating arguments in Old Trafford's K Stand and the disillusion they felt over what they saw as the board's repeated blocking of transfers proposed by the manager, Alex Ferguson.

No one quite knows what will happen now. Of course, there are queries about fair trading and potential for television bias but unless things have changed dramatically in the decade that has passed since I stood regularly on the Stretford End, football fans, even Manchester United football



Oliver Holt, football correspondent, traces the origins and traditions of England's most renowned club

fans, will be happy as long as they feel they have an owner who, for whatever reason, shares their ambitions for their team. The previous involvement of other companies owned by Rupert Murdoch in professional sports in the United States suggest some cause for optimism.

Part of the reason for the sensitivity of the takeover, of course, is that United, more than any other club in England, is what it is because of its past and the heroic and tragic figures that lit through it. It hardly seems likely that BSKyB will tamper with that heritage any more than did Edwards.

The irony is that there is a strong element of continuity between the purchase of the club by BSKyB — whose biggest shareholder is News International, owner of *The Times* — and its early heritage when it was controlled by interests linked with dominant contemporary industry. When railway was king, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company were its patrons. At the turn of the century, a brewer called John Henry Davies stepped in to save the club from its creditors.

As Newton Heath, they were admitted to the second division in 1892 and when they went bankrupt, Manchester United was formed in

1902. Its special place in the affections of the nation was woven in tragedy when many of the brilliant young team put together by then the manager, Matt Busby, were killed in an air crash at Munich airport in 1958. Duncan Edwards, the youngest player apart from Michael Owen to appear for England, was one of those who was lost.

United recovered from the disaster, though, and with Busby restored to health and a genius called George Best ripping the best continental defences to shreds with Bobby Charlton and Denis Law, they became the first English club

to lift the European Cup when they beat Benfica 4-1 at Wembley in 1968.

A succession of managers, from Frank O'Farrell to Ron Atkinson have tried and failed to emulate that achievement and it has only been under the last decade of stewardship from Ferguson that they have come close to dominating the best of the rest in Europe again.

Much of Ferguson's success has been achieved by his unparalleled cultivation of a successful youth system that has spawned home-grown players of the calibre of Ryan Giggs and David Beckham.

But over the course of last season, when United were comfortably beaten to the league championship by Arsenal, it began to seem as though the club's board, with its responsibilities to the stock market, was using that success to

justify not competing with big-spending teams like Internazionale and Barcelona for the cream of world talent.

That readiness to be outbid is likely to be a thing of the past now but the reality is that there are few tangible signs of other traditions left for BSKyB to tinker with. The terraces have already gone; the stadium is as modern as it gets in the FA Carling Premiership, the merchandising operation is as sophisticated as any in the world.

All that is left for BSKyB is to pour more money into the team. If Manchester United sign Alessandro Del Piero to partner Ronaldo in attack for the start of next season, will their fans and the rest of the Premiership's paying public be demonstrating then?

United deal, page 1

Clubs start war of words over sale of Merson

By GEORGE CAULKIN AND RUSSELL KEMPSON

AS PAUL MERSON smiled sweetly for the cameras and mouthed the usual platitudes about new beginnings after completing the formalities of his £6.75 million transfer to Aston Villa yesterday, his former club, Middlesbrough, were saying a few words of their own. Like "nonsense", "slur", "libel" and "lies".

Losing their leading players in controversial circumstances has become something of a speciality of Bryan Robson's team, but the varied departures of Fabrizio Ravanelli, Emerson and Juninho were of a wholly different calibre to the acrimony dredged up by the utterances of the Middlesbrough manager and his chief executive, Keith Lamb, in a press conference charged with tension and emotion.

Their main points of contention were threefold: Merson's suggestion, made in his weekend newspaper column, that the club lacked ambition, the

repeated insinuations about the off-field habits of Robson's players and his slant on the events that led to his quickfire sale. Vitriol was not spared.

"The fans, the club, his friends, the players, everybody connected with Middlesbrough has been let down by Paul Merson," Lamb said. "He knew the way this club had been treated by other international players and when he came here he said he would never treat us the way the others had. That's what he's done."

"I hope he treats his new club better than his old one. If he takes a moment to reflect, he will remember how everybody has bent over backwards to help him and his family overcome his particular problems, how the club even babysat his children. This is a strange way of going about repaying us."

"It is nonsense to say that this club lacks ambition. We

have built a new stadium, a new training ground and Bryan has spent more than £50 million on new players, all in the last few years. To say that his fellow players are drinkers and gamblers is a total non-sense, a slur and a libel, but I've got better things to do with my time than sue the likes of Paul Merson."

The strength of Lamb's riposte could partially be explained by Merson's earlier insistence that he "never asked to leave". According to Middlesbrough, John Gregory, the Aston Villa manager, first made contact with Robson early last Friday morning, hard on the heels of the stories that alluded to Merson's unhappiness, again the following day and negotiations began on Sunday.

A planned meeting between Robson, Merson and his agent, Steve Kutner, planned for Monday, never materialised. "To say he was driven out is a lie," Lamb said.

Robson's dominant emotion was one of sadness. "As far as boozing and gambling are concerned, I don't have any problems with my players. Most are teetotal and gambling doesn't even come into consideration. Paul and his friends have criticised us but perhaps he should look in the mirror a little bit with the problems he has had."

Almost simultaneously, amid chaotic scenes at Villa Park, Merson and Gregory strode into their press conference 90 minutes late. Television crews and journalists vied for space with a number of Villa supporters, who had inexplicably been allowed into the small room. When Merson began taking questions, his unconvincing answers only added to the surreal occasion. "Things get out of hand, I didn't ask for a move," he said. "I said there were problems at Middlesbrough and they sold me. They wanted me to go to Tottenham but I didn't want to go there. I said I was unhappy

but instead of making me happy, they sold me."

Merson admitted that his unhappiness was related to his past addictions. "Yes, of course," he said. "It was getting hard at Boro. It was getting hard. It's been up and down for me over the past 12 months. It's been a rollercoaster year. It's been building up steadily and what I need is stability."

When asked why he had alleged that drinking and gambling were fine among the Middlesbrough players, he replied: "I talk my mind. I don't like to hold things in. Yet when asked to expand on his claims, he repeatedly offered no more than lame explanations.

"I talked to Paul Gascoigne. This has nothing to do with him and he knows that."

Merson said. "There are plenty of other problems. I went much deeper than that. All this blaming of the Boro players has got out of hand. I know them and I don't want to get involved in slugging off people."

Merson paid tribute to Robson and Middlesbrough. "I can't talk too highly about Bryan," he said. "It was part of the team that got promoted. I did the business for them. And my conscience is clear."

However, it rang hollow. Many observers believe that Merson became disillusioned with the club and its apparent lack of ambition. A move suited him and the allegations against the Middlesbrough players were a convenient smokescreen.

Gregory deflected any doubting of Merson's motives, saying that had made the first move by contacting Robson. "I instigated it all," he said. "It was down to me, not Paul. A lot of people wrote him off when he left Arsenal but he's playing as well as ever now."

In a humorous conclusion, Gregory made reference to the recent antics of Mark Bosnich, the Villa goalkeeper, and Dwight Yorke, the former Villa striker, whose bedroom frolics were captured on film and published in a national newspaper. "We've got one or two players who like dressing up in women's clothing and having their bottoms spanked," Gregory said. "Paul should fit in quite nicely here."

In every other respect, Davenport, seeded No 2, has taken the necessary steps. She has lost 26th in the past 18 months and maintains she is more competitive. That remains to be seen in her quarter-final today against Amanda Coetzer, seeded No 13.

Yevgeny Kafelnikov, seeded No 11, lost in four sets to the unseeded Swede, Thomas Johansson, last night. Johansson was awaiting the winner between Tim Henman and Mark Philippoussis.

Fighting chance, page 42



Paul Merson displays his new shirt after finalising his transfer from Middlesbrough to Aston Villa for a fee of £6.75 million

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD

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No 1506

- ACROSS: 1 Start to grow (6) 5 Suit turn into (6) 8 Run away; roll of cloth (4) 9 About to happen (8) 10 Loss of hope (7) 11 Throb, beat (5) 13 Travel widely (3,3,5) 16 Eur. royal house once some Operas (5) 18 Thoughtful (7) 21 Rudimentary (8) 22 His wife a countess (4) 23 Ski obstacle race (6) 24 Israeli money (6)
- DOWN: 2 Skill, daring (7) 3 Available whenever wanted (2,3) 4 Gloaming (8) 5 Jolt; exclude from plane flight (4) 6 Defeat (7) 7 Take-away (sign) (5) 12 Splinter-removing implement (8) 14 Marking an era (7) 15 Of many different types (7) 17 Make void (5) 19 One from Uppsala (5) 20 Windless (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1505
ACROSS: 1 Logo 3 Teenager 9 Fresh 10 Pimento 11 Lincoln 12 Born 14 Kaolin 16 Dahlia 18 Oslo 19 Picasso 22 Baggage 23 Opine 24 Eastern 25 Ooops
DOWN: 1 Lifelike 2 Greenhouse gas 4 Expend 5 Namibia 6 Generalissimo 7 Rook 8 Shoo 13 Baroness 15 Iron Age 17 Appeal 20 Chip 21 Oboe

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Tame exit for Kournikova

FROM JULIAN MUSCAT, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT IN NEW YORK

THE first and last grand-slam tournaments of the season dispensed very different experiences for Anna Kournikova, the Russian-born pin-up who, at 17, has already earned more than the average Premiership footballer over his whole career. Although she progressed further than at the Australian Open in January, there was something almost anonymous about her fourth-round exit from the US Open late on Monday night.

Kournikova, seeded No 15, was beaten rather tamely by Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, seeded No 4. No surprise in that — except that Kournikova had never lost to the Spaniard in three previous matches. She rallied from a 5-3 deficit to force a first-set tie-break but was well beaten when Sanchez-Vicario struck the winning blow to triumph 7-6, 6-3.

So the golden girl was gone. Kournikova came and went quietly, quite unlike her fanfare appearance at the

Australian Open seven months ago. On that occasion Kournikova was everywhere, she was even photographed in Sydney with the Spice Girls. And on the court, she tussled hard with Martina Hingis, who would successfully defend her title, in the match of the entire championship. There have been no such fringe activities at Flushing Meadows. It was Sanchez-Vicario who stole the show.

Kournikova has just endured her first divorce from the International Management Group (IMG), which signed her up when she was 12. It was IMG who orchestrated those very public appearances but Kournikova has now changed her tune because ... she wants to concentrate on her tennis.

Did she know that she was on the cover of the Russian magazine, Sport Express?

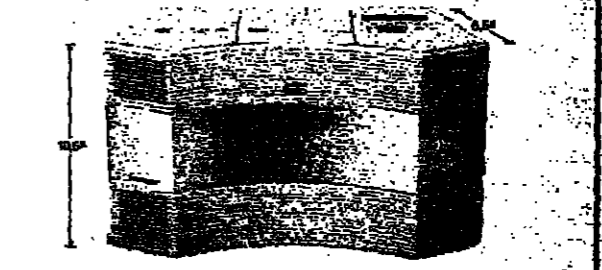
"And" came the reply. Was she proud that her country-folk were following her? "I am on the cover here too. I am not proud to be on the cover because my goal is to play good tennis." From Russia without love, or so it seems.

The problem is that she hasn't been doing that lately. The playing-hand thumb she sprained in defeating Steffi Graf at Eastbourne in June restricted her preparation for this curtain-call event. She had played just five competitive matches since she withdrew from Wimbledon, which probably offered her best chance of winning a grand-slam.

Sanchez-Vicario, who today plays Venus Williams for a semi-final place, is the anthesis of Kournikova. "I sneak around and do well," she ventured. The same is true of Lindsay Davenport, who has yet to break through at grand-

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